

THE SLAVE
in Greece and Rome



JEAN ANDRÉAU
and RAYMOND DESCAT

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THE SLAVE

in Greece and Rome



✦ TRANSLATED BY MARION LEOPOLD ✦

JEAN ANDREAU
and RAYMOND DESCAT

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Contents

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THE SLAVE IN GREECE AND ROME

Introduction

1 What Is a Slave?

2 The Earliest Forms of Slavery

3 A Slave Population

4 The Slave and Economic Life

5 The Slave in the Household and the City

6 Escaping Slavery

7 Slavery at the End of the Western Empire

Notes

Index

Index Locorum

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THE SLAVE IN GREECE AND ROME

Introduction

On February 4, 1794, the National Convention in France abolished slavery in the French Antilles. This was the first, short-lived episode—slavery was reinstated in 1802—of an abolition which became irrevocable in 1848. Today abolition is a matter of fact, although it is widely estimated that worldwide some twenty million adults are still subjected to forms of statutory and “traditional” slavery.

In a recent book,¹ M. Lengelle-Tardy writes that a poorly paid factory worker in an emerging economy, or an unemployed person without benefits who sleeps in the streets, is a slave in the same way as those of Greece and Rome or as black Americans before 1865. Although his indignation in the face of such destitution is certainly justified, it is important to reject this confusion between the slave, who is the legal property of someone else, and the person who is miserable but legally free—a confusion that flouts all intellectual rigor.

These considerations demonstrate, nonetheless, the extent to which slavery, approximately one and a half centuries after its official disappearance, is thought to be a revolting, indeed an unbearable condition, and the extent to which it remains an issue today. To speak of slavery is to evoke unparalleled social callousness; we readily liken the most inhumane forms of social oppression to slavery.

“Authentic” historical slavery was, however, much more complex and varied than we imagine—even if, to be sure, it remains morally reprehensible. There was, in fact, a society in which slavery was common practice and in which nobody called for its abolition: Greek and Roman Antiquity.² Slavery in that society was, indeed, never abolished. Slaves participated in almost all spheres of life and of the economy, including the cultural and administrative spheres.

Available evidence is certainly far less extensive than for more recent periods, since archival documents have all but disappeared. This fact may seem trivial, but it should not be forgotten.³ The lack of source material is particularly striking with respect to slaves: we have virtually no texts, even literary ones, written by slaves and addressing their slave condition. Some authors of that period were, nonetheless, former slaves: the storyteller Aesop; Terence, probably of Carthaginian origins, who was manumitted by the senator Terentius Lucanus; the storyteller Phaedrus; the philosopher Epictetus. But they do not present ideas about slavery that are different from those of men and women who were born free, and they say nothing, or next to nothing, about their lives as slaves. Epictetus alludes to it once or twice

(*Discourses* 1.9.29–30), but so briefly that if we are not attentive, the fact that he had been a slave does not even register. And when he does speak about slavery, it is in general terms, without referring to his own experience (1.19.19–23). Similarly, funerary epitaphs of slaves are few in comparison with those of their masters. We have nothing that resembles the “histories of slaves” of medieval Spain⁴ or the autobiographies written by North American slaves—for instance Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, William S. Scarborough.⁵

It is only through the accounts of slaveholders that we know about slavery and the life of slaves. As we have noted, they were all in favor of slavery, even if some of them expressed unease or regret. However, the masters spoke little of the slaves, and almost never of the ones they did not know personally. They were interested in their close domestic slaves, but not in those who were peasants or miners. Although the subject of slavery was not forbidden, for various reasons related to social conventions, a heavy silence prevailed. Slaves belonged to the forgotten ones of history.

Those who had been enslaved were profoundly affected, even in their daily lives, by the memory of the first day, the “day of slavery” as Homer put it. Others were born slaves, and experienced from birth this “social death.”⁶ For a slave, existence was, by definition, reduced to everyday life. Truly new events were extremely rare; for instance, a decision by the master to sell his slave—a source of great fear for the latter—or to sell those close to him or his friends. Beyond such events or manumission, all that counted were the rules and laws of the master. And yet, with in this social death, individual life emerged and flourished. It is this individual life that we attempt to describe here.

A slave is socially “invisible,” since, in principle, he is nothing more than an object belonging to his master, in the same way that a house or livestock does. But in fact, although he is reduced to the level of an object, the slave exists, and is expected to work; he has a place, even if it is a burdensome and humiliating one. Furthermore, in order for such a regime to take hold and to perpetuate itself across generations, a whole series of legal provisions is required. It is therefore necessary for the slave to have a status, albeit empty—one might say a negative status compared to that of citizens. As we shall see, it is precisely with respect to these statutory considerations that the Greek and Roman evidence provides us with the most useful information.

This book is organized around two themes: on the one hand, the daily, real-life experience of slaves, on the other, the important place they occupy in economic and social structures—in the household and sometimes even in the machinery of the Greek city and the Roman Empire. In several chapters we will raise questions that we deem critical to the understanding of our basic themes. How does one define

the ancient slave? Can we speak of a slave society? How are we to understand the functioning and profitability of slavery in the economy?

Since Rome experienced early on the influence of Greece and its culture, and the Hellenistic world in turn was integrated into the Roman world starting in the second century BCE, we believed it necessary to deal simultaneously with slaves of the Greek world and those of Rome—something which has not been done in France since the new edition, in 1879, of Henri Wallon's *Histoire de l'esclavage dans l'Antiquité*. Since one of us is a specialist in ancient Greece and the other a specialist in the Roman world, the blending of our two points of view enriched our perception of the historical facts.

The first chapter addresses, with respect to these two halves of classical Antiquity, a problem of definition: what is a slave, and what distinguishes a slave from a non-slave dependent? Chapter 3 deals with the size of the slave population, their demographics and the sources of supply of slaves. Chapter 4 describes their work, their working conditions and their role in different sectors of economic life: agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce. Chapter 5 studies their relationships with their masters, their place in the family and in society. Chapter 6 examines the means at their disposal for escaping from slavery, especially manumission. For the archaic period, which is the subject of chapter 2, we decided to draw a sharper distinction between Greece and Rome, as the differences between the two are much more pronounced in those ancient times; this second chapter, "The Earliest Forms of Slavery," is thus divided into two parts, one on archaic Greece, the other on archaic Rome. Finally, the last chapter, which is devoted to the evolution of slavery in the last centuries of the Western Empire—between the third century and the early fifth century CE—necessarily applies only to the Roman world.

1 WHAT IS A SLAVE?

Although slavery, in the same manner as citizenship, constitutes the most characteristic social reality of Antiquity, its definition is not self-evident. How is slavery different from those other forms of man's domination of man that are often called "dependency" or "servitude"?

Slavery is not a permanent feature of human societies. It was, in fact, completely unknown to some of them. The ancients were fully aware of this, particularly the Greeks, who considered the absence of slaves to be something of a puzzle. For instance, Diodorus of Sicily writes: "Among some strange customs practiced by Indians, the most astonishing appears to be one that was introduced by their ancient philosophers; the law states that, without exception, no one among them is a slave and that people shall live as freemen with respect for the equality of all."¹

According to the ancients, even in Greece slavery did not always exist. Herodotus writes that in the time of the Pelasgians, who were believed to be the first inhabitants of Greece, "the Athenians, like other Greeks, did not yet have servants." In the fifth century BCE, a contemporary of Aristophanes observes, "In those days, nobody had slaves [...]; rather women had to shoulder all the work of the household." These views were not truly historical as we understand that word. For the Greeks placed that period in a past so distant that, to them, slavery seemed to coincide with the onset of progress and civilization. The same held true for Rome: certain texts typically attribute the institution of slavery to the founder of the city, Romulus, who is believed to have ruled in the second half of the eighth century BCE.

The ancients were, however, aware of the fact that even in recent times, slavery did not exist in all known areas, as was the case, until the middle of the fourth century BCE, in two regions in the center of Greece, Locris and Phocis: "it was not customary for the Locrians, any more than for the Phocians, even to possess maidservants or male slaves except on a guarantee for the agreed periods. On the contrary, the wife of Philomelus, who took Delphi, was the first woman to be attended by two maidservants."²

A Question of Words

As aware as they may have been of its relative novelty, the ancients rarely felt the need to explain slavery; it was an integral part of their

lives and, as such, needed no explaining. Thus, for the most part, they simply referred to it using their vocabulary and way of thinking. The first difficulty for us is to recognize a slave. Words are the first evidences of slavery, although certainly not the most reliable ones. Such words vary considerably. Some have the distinctive characteristic of expressing a practical situation rather than a social status. They can even cause confusion, because the terminology changes according to the times; thus *dmōs*, the word most frequently used in the epic poetry of Homer to designate the slave, subsequently disappears.

In Greek, only two terms appear to be specific. The first and most common is *doulos*. It signifies, from a legal point of view, the opposite of *éleuthéros* or freeman. The second, *andrapodon*, literally means “the man-footed creature.” Based on *tétrapodon*, “the quadruped,” which designates livestock, *andrapodon* conveys in vivid terms the power structure on which slavery was founded. The many other Greek words referring to slaves can also, in different contexts, designate freeborn men and women who were in a position of dependency and inferiority: for instance the servant, *thērapôn*, the domestic, *oikētēs*, or the child, the boy, *païs*.

Latin vocabulary referring to the slave lends itself to the same observation, even if, in this area, the Latin language is less well supplied with vocabulary than Greek. The most common word is *servus* (*serva* for women), which appears to come from the Etruscan. There is also a neutral noun, *mancipium*. This legal term refers simultaneously to a mode of acquisition, the property rights that result from that mode of acquisition, and finally the acquired object: specifically, here, the slave. Other words in use can, as in Greek, also apply to freeborn men and women: *famulus* and *famula*, the male or female domestic or servant; *ancilla*, the female servant; and *puer*, the boy, *puella*, the girl. The imprecise nature of certain words makes understanding the status of the slave all the more difficult in the sense that in all societies in which slavery is widespread the whole vocabulary is affected by it, either literally or metaphorically.

But it would be a mistake to think that the ancient writers did not care about accuracy. On the contrary, as slavery spread throughout Greece, distinctions appeared. Authors of the fifth century still did not differentiate between forms of servitude. For instance, when Thucydides refers to the situation on Chios in 412, he writes that “there were a great many slaves on Chios, more than in any one state besides Sparta. Because of their number, these slaves were very harshly punished for any misconduct.”³

The difference between slaves (on Chios) and dependents or serfs (in Sparta) was not yet considered significant. It did not emerge until

the fourth century, in the writings of Plato, who associates the Helots of Sparta to the Penestae of Thessaly, and in those of Aristotle, who puts the Killykilirians of Syracuse in the same category.

But it is the fourth-century Greek historian Theopompus who is the first to present this difference clearly and explicitly:

The Chians were the first of the Greeks, after the Thessalians and the Lace-daemonians, to use slaves, but they did not acquire them in the same way. For the Lacedaemonians and the Thessalians, as will be seen, constituted their slave-class out of the Greeks who had earlier inhabited the territories which they themselves possess to-day, the Lacedaemonians taking the land of the Achaeans, the Thessalians, that of the Perrhaebians and Magnesians. The people reduced to slavery were in the first instance called helots, in the second penestae. But the slaves whom the Chians own are derived from non-Greek peoples, and they pay a price for them.⁴

Subsequently, analysis that distinguishes between two forms of servitude is applied to other regions and to other peoples known to the Greeks who are assimilated to the Helots (for instance, the Leleges of Caria, according to the third century BCE author Philip of Theangela). The central question of status is now addressed. An ancient commentary on a passage by the poet Theocritus notes that according to Theopompus, “those of the *free men* who live in a state of *dependency* are called Penestae by the Thessalians and Helots by the Lace-daemonians.” This leads to the famous comment by the second-century grammarian Pollux that sums up very well all the erudite reflection of Antiquity: “Between freeborn men and slaves one finds the Helots of the Lacedaemonians, the Penestae of the Thessalians, the Clarotes and the Mnoites of the Cretans, the Dorophores of the Mariandynians, the Gymnetes of the Argians and the Korynephores of the Sicyonians.”

A text of this sort is not entirely instructive. It shows a clear awareness of the fact that nonslave dependents cannot be confused either with slaves or with free people. But is it correct to place them “in the middle,” “between” freeborn men and slaves? The question can

be debated, but since, as we shall see, these dependents are not entirely the private property of a master, it is not necessarily incorrect to consider their status as being intermediate, in between the categories on either side.

The essential point here is the difference between two statuses: slavery proper and serfdom. It is moreover not by chance that the distinction appeared in the texts of the ancients in the fourth century; from that period on the Greek world experienced a decline in what we refer to here as “serfdom.” Sometimes described as “dependency,” “rural dependency,” or “community servitude,” serfdom existed for a very long time; it was present both in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, and even in those societies that practiced slavery.

As Moses I. Finley points out, the existence of this communal servitude in no way implies feudalism. Like Marc Bloch, he strongly criticizes those who see feudalism everywhere and thus reach “the impasse of a quasi-universal feudalism.” We fully agree with him on that matter. We use the words “serfdom” and “serf ” only because they are practical, and help to bring out certain invariant traits of rural and community dependencies. Serfs, as we use the word here, have often been present in nonfeudal societies. And we do not believe that one can speak of feudal societies in the context of classical Antiquity. Although they have been emphasized, these differences between slavery and serfdom do not appear to have been analyzed from all angles in Antiquity, except probably from a legal standpoint. While legal texts relating to slavery are relatively numerous and accurate, the same cannot be said of those that deal with rural and community dependencies.

A Definition of the Slave

What, then, is a slave, the slave that one encounters in the Greek cities from the end of the archaic period through the Hellenistic period, or in Rome and the Roman world?

To begin with, a slave is a man, a woman, or a child who is considered to be the property of a master (or a mistress). At the same time, everyone knows that a slave is a human being, that he is not necessarily born a slave, and that, conversely, any freeborn man or woman can become a slave. Legally and politically, the slave is considered to be an object that belongs to the patrimony of his owner, in the same way that a house or livestock does. Nonetheless, even from a legal point of view his humanity is recognized, and from very early on. This recognition does not date from the Roman Empire, and it is not only a result of Stoical or Christian influence. The slave is

certainly a commodity, but, as the jurist Africanus writes, in Rome one refuses to call him *merx*, the word that applies to all other merchandise.

In any event, this situation creates and reflects a very powerful domination of slaves by their masters: as an object, the slave can be disposed of by his master at the latter's discretion, like any other commodity; as a man, on the other hand, he can be manumitted—but always in accordance with the will of the master or, in exceptional cases, through the intervention of the political community.

The slave did not have a personal identity. As Philostratus wrote, “we must surely class among slaves one who had neither name of his own, nor parentage, nor city, nor inheritance.”⁵ The slave was given his name by his master and has neither a patronymic nor a family name. It was simply noted, in certain cases, that he is a native of this or that ethnic group (that he is Thracian, Carthaginian, Gaulish). But, of course, he was not officially tied to that ethnic group. The slave always came from elsewhere, his origin was always foreign. In the Greek cities, he was not a former citizen of the city in which he was a slave. In the Roman world, he was not a former Roman citizen. A single important exception to that rule was the debt slave. But the debt slave represents a form of dependency that is distinct from slavery proper. Moreover, debt slavery was abolished at the end of the archaic period in the Greek cities, and at the end of the fourth century in Rome. In the case of certain peoples that were dominated by the Greeks and Romans (for instance in Asia Minor), it survived until the end of Antiquity.

Generally speaking, the slave was not only a foreigner by origin but also a kind of “absolute foreigner” where he lived. Forced to work for his master, he acquired, *de facto*, a place where his master lived. He was forbidden to establish, through marriage for instance, a social position that was recognized in the community. Certain female slaves had children, but it is impossible to quantify this local reproduction of slaves or to determine its importance, which may have varied over time. (We will return to this question.) These slaves, who were born in the house of their mother's master, and who were also the property of that master, were called *oikogēneis* in Greek and *vernae* in Latin.

Slaves were usually bought. This was how property rights were established. But they could also be given away as a present or captured in war. Even if they were bought, their being sold into slavery usually resulted from a violent event. This event could be external—from war to piracy—or internal—from trafficking to indebtedness (which, as mentioned, remained in effect among non-Greek and non-Roman peoples). Slaves were taken primarily by right of conquest in war, although slavery was not the fate of all prisoners

of war in all periods: some were killed, others were integrated, at least originally, into the victorious people. The extent of the slave trade and of trafficking is difficult to measure, but its reality is indisputable. During the archaic period in Greece and the last two or three centuries of the Roman Republic, slave trade existed; subsequently, specialized merchants continued to buy slaves in regions outside of the Roman Empire, or even inside the Empire.

Finally, the master could, in principle, assign any task to the slave. Of course this principle has its limits, since all work requires training, however basic, and skills. Although some texts speak of domestics who were taken to the master's estate to do seasonal work (harvesting or grape picking, for instance), it is not easy to transform a farmer into a craftsman or an accountant. Overall though, the principle of the slave's availability is very important. It explains the fact that, in the Greco-Roman world, we find slaves in all sectors of the economy, including the service sector and the administration. Thus, many private masters directed some of their slaves toward the management of businesses or of craft workshops, while Greek cities or Roman emperors chose to entrust certain administrative tasks to slaves or freed slaves. Hence the considerable diversity in the material and professional conditions of slaves: although the majority of slaves undoubtedly had a very tough life (in mines, in craft workshops, in the countryside), there was also a minority of privileged slaves.

Under this regime, the slaves of the Greco-Roman world did not in any way constitute a full-fledged social class, tied to certain well-determined economic functions; but they did represent a major social factor.

Traditional forms of rural dependency, which we have chosen to call serfdom, did not have all of these distinctive traits. Of course, serfs, like slaves, were dominated by masters and by states; this domination manifested itself through multiple practices of social debasement, even if, in certain cases, the role of the serf was important to the life and the economy of the community.

Serfs had a master, but were not entirely his property. Generally speaking, it was forbidden to sell them (an interdiction that was sometimes limited to foreigners). It was often also forbidden to manumit them; only the community could make that decision, and more often on a collective than on an individual basis. Serfs were natives of the territory in which they lived, and were sometimes even of local stock that predated that of their masters. Their status, as it was known through the historical tradition of their masters' communities, derived not from their purchase, but from the conquest of their land by newcomers who became their masters, or from a more

or less “voluntary” submission, under duress. This situation implies the existence of an agreement, of a “contract,” at least on an ideological level, that tied them to their masters. The contract translated into practical clauses calling for obedience and for the rendering of services and work, in the form of sharecropping arrangements.

Of course serfs had individual names, but these are never mentioned by our sources. They were first and foremost peoples, whose collective name conferred a social identity within the community in which they lived. Although they were at the bottom of the social ladder, they belonged to the community, which granted them a social life, both in the public sphere (for example, the obligation to participate in wars) and on a private level. In particular, they had the right to produce offspring and to contract marriages, although, in most cases, we are unable to define more precisely the nature of these unions.

Finally, their involvement in economic activities was more limited than that of slaves. They were hired on a “contractual” basis to render services that were generally very demanding and defined by tradition. Moreover, in Antiquity, many communities that practiced this system had economies that were less open to trade. This is indeed one of the reasons that led, over time, to the transformation and, in certain cases, the disappearance of serfdom.

Societies with Slaves or Slave Societies?

So, were the ancient societies “slave societies”? The question is all the more important since Anglo-Saxon historians readily speak of two historical phases: the *society with slaves* and the *slave society*. The expression *slave society* has been closely tied to a Marxist vision of history (particularly in France and Italy), to the notion of mode of production and the idea that the economy exercises a decisive influence on social structures. It seems nonetheless possible to use the expression “slave society” independently of this ideological background. In our opinion, the notion of “slave society,” which is more social than economic, should not be confused with that of “slave mode of production,” which refers primarily to economic production.⁶

What is a slave society? The South of the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century is considered a slave society. This is not the case of the Middle Ages in the West, which nevertheless experienced slavery; it is referred to rather as a society “with slaves.” What are the differences between the two societies? The criterion for slave societies is one of numbers. The number of slaves in slave

societies is generally much higher than in societies “with slaves.” If they account for less than 4 or 5 percent of the entire population, and if they are primarily domestic servants, slavery does not play the same role as in a society in which 30 percent or more of the population is made up of slaves, many of whom are farmers or miners. There is no slave society if the number of slaves is low. Without attempting to set a fixed numerical limit, the number of slaves that we arrive at for the central regions of Greco-Roman Antiquity justifies, in our opinion, characterizing these societies as “slave societies.” Moreover, societies with slaves are not able to assure a constant renewal of slaves. And the slaves in these societies are more integrated into networks of kinship and of social interaction common to freeborn men and women.

Even in peninsular Italy—the region of the Roman world that had the most slaves—slaves were almost always a minority within the population. Before the second century BCE, then starting again in the first century BCE and during the Principate, slaves did not comprise more than 30 to 40 percent of the population. In the whole of the Roman Empire they probably did not account for more than 15 to 20 percent. This society should nonetheless be characterized as a slave society: the strong minority of slaves was sufficient for the entire Empire to be influenced by the existence of slavery. In fact, Moses I. Finley lists five slave societies in the history of the world: Classical Greece and certain parts of the Hellenistic world; the Roman world of the end of the Republic and of the Empire; the United States before the Civil War; the Antilles and Brazil during the colonial period. Subject to more precise verification, this inventory represents a good starting point.

If, as Jean-Christian Dumont points out, at least a third of Italy’s population were slaves, it can hardly be argued that “they only represented an oddity or a vestige.” And clearly their disappearance, “the disappearance of a third of the population, would have disrupted the economy.”

Did slaves carry out most of the work required for assuring production and services? For the whole of the Roman world, the answer is probably no, since 15 or 20 percent of the population could not, on their own, accomplish more than half of the work. At any rate, the economy of a slave society encourages the acquisition of more slaves. The number automatically grows because a regular influx of slaves is possible. This was the case with Chios, in Greece, starting in the archaic period, in the context of trade relations with the Near East. War and coercion continue to play a role, but this role is integrated into a regular process of acquisition through commerce—in other words, the slave trade.

The existence of “commercial” slavery is not limited to slave societies. One finds cases—for instance in the earliest times of Greek history—where the number of slaves remained relatively limited but trade occurred nonetheless.

As far back as the Mycenaean period, in the second millennium BCE, slaves could be bought (even if we do not know exactly how)—as well as later on, according to the first literary texts, those of Homer and Hesiod. But in these cases, no regular slave market has been attested; most slaves were the product of war and piracy. In the five slave societies identified by Finley, by contrast, the absence of organized slave trade (trafficking that is not directly linked to war) is inconceivable. Slave trade existed in Greco-Roman Antiquity, although it is not easy to determine on what scale and how widespread it was.

Whatever their numbers, slaves did not play the same economic role in all slave societies, and these societies were not all equally developed: the economic importance of slaves in the American South was marginal compared to that of slaves in the West Indies. Furthermore, slavery is not only about the number of slaves and their effect on the economy; one must also take into account social hierarchies, the role of slavery in individual choices, and finally cultural and ideological traditions.

Slave societies must enact laws and create institutions for controlling slavery, because slaves constitute a social group that is perceived as hostile and dangerous. Moreover, the slave must be legally identified as personal property. This requires a degree of development of the law, which Rome, in particular, had achieved. Whether or not manumission is possible (in Antiquity it was), whether or not the freed slave is given citizenship (in Rome he obtained it; in Greece he did not), the slave society clearly and effectively forbids him to attain a higher status as long as he is a slave, and does everything it can to prevent him from attaining that status. The social distance between slave and free person is the foundation of the community. Manumission exists, and is often put into practice, but as long as the slave is not manumitted, he remains an outsider to the community.

Slavery also affects the personal choices of citizens. This is the case in economic matters: the landowner, for instance, must choose between a work force that is servile or one that is free; the shopkeeper has a certain measure of choice between a slave assistant and a free one. It is also the case in the administration: in the Roman Republic, corporations that collected taxes for Rome (called *publicani* in Latin) had many slaves in their ranks; and, later on, the Roman emperors gave some of their own slaves and freed slaves an important role in running the state. Even the composition of the family is affected by

slavery: in Roman Italy, the wives of men of modest means, and particularly of freedmen, were quite often slaves who had been their lovers and whom they freed before marrying them. The owning and use of slaves are thus at the heart of individual preoccupations and choices, and this, in turn, must have affected the entire community.

Finally, in a slave society, slaves act as a kind of foil; they make up the other face of society, in contrast to which free men and women define themselves. This is not at all the case in the writings of Homer or Hesiod. In this sense, even the slave in a slave society has a certain place in the community. Calling a free man a slave is the worst of insults, because the slave belongs to the bad half of society, to its dark and hidden side.⁷ Although slavery no longer exists in our day and age, it is still invoked, under the influence of cultural memories that are usually not conscious, to put down someone who appears vulnerable to criticism or who is considered contemptible. In the writings of modern authors whose works are based on those of the ancients, representations of this social duality have not yet completely disappeared.

2 THE EARLIEST FORMS OF SLAVERY

The Fourteenth and Thirteenth Centuries BCE: The Mycenaean Period of the Linear B Tablets

In the Greek world, the first known slaves lived in the Mycenaean period, in Knossos and Pylos, during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. In the tablets inscribed in Linear B, the syllabic Mycenaean script, we find the words *doero* in the masculine and *doera* in the feminine, which are the equivalent of *doulos* (feminine *doulè*), the most common Greek term in the first millennium for slave (*doulos* is based on a contraction of *doelos*). Our evidence for this period is very specific: it consists of administrative texts established under the authority of the royal palaces, which mention accounting activities. Many of these documents register, either collectively or individually, persons who are subject to palace authority and whose activity is controlled. Reference is made to the food and raw materials they receive, the work and chores they must undertake, the gifts or access to land from which they benefit.

But for the Mycenaean period, there are no comprehensive legal texts. Nor have any chronicles or narrative texts presenting these individuals in specific situations been preserved. The word *doero* is therefore the principal indication we have of the existence of slavery as a condition.

In these texts, capture or war never appear as sources of slavery, probably because the texts refer to slaves who are already integrated into the palaces or other ownership structures. On the other hand, two tablets from Knossos mention purchases (*qirijato*, the equivalent of the first millennium Greek word *ēpriato*: “bought”). One of the two tablets refers to a man (“so-and-so bought the slave from Kurios”), the other to a woman.¹ It is impossible to know whether these are first-time purchases after capture. These slaves, then, have masters: most of the time the mention of the *doero* is accompanied by a name that—even if this is not explicit—refers to an owner, either by name or through his administrative duties. When their function is specified, these masters are various types of dignitaries: priests and priestesses (*ijereja doera*) or “collectors.” There are also “slaves of the god” (*teojo doero*). The tablets mention, for instance, the goddesses Artemis and Divia. Sometimes, however, the god is not named (in which case, he is probably Poseidon, the great god of Pylos).

This is why a distinction is usually made between two types of

slaves, those that belong to a “human” owner, and the “slaves of the god.” But the exact significance of that distinction is not known. Although we have no indication of the sale of a *teojo doero*, this does not mean that the “slaves of the god” are not sold. The single observable difference is that the “slaves of the god” appear only in texts alluding to the allocation of land, never in those mentioning labor obligations.

It is impossible to assess the numerical significance of slavery, as we do not know all the terms that designate the status of persons—often women—who work in the service of the palace. For both Knossos and Pylos, there are lists of women who, in most cases, card wool, and for whom food, the supervision of work, and even, in certain cases, the education of their children are the responsibility of the authorities. These women, who appear to be single, are sometimes called *doera*, and this name is followed by a given name. Yet it is difficult to identify them as slaves: there are more than a thousand of them in both Knossos and Pylos; this would mean according extraordinary importance to the phenomenon of slavery. Consequently, there are those who prefer to view this simply as women subjected to chores, at least for a part of the year. Finally, among the certain examples of slavery, in addition to the slaves of the god—of 63 known names of slaves, 44 belong to slaves of the god—the two most important slave owners mentioned possess 32 and 20 slaves respectively.

The names of several dozen of these slaves have been preserved. They show great variety. Some, known through myths and epics, are traditional names in Mycenaean society. It is remarkable that the names Hector, Theseus, and Idomeneus were borne by slaves! Other names are more characteristic of slave onomastics, referring, for instance, to trades (shepherd) or to geographical origins (Trojan, Corinthian).

Their economic role is clear, but difficult to assess. All sectors of activity have their slaves, from agriculture and tending livestock to craft, textile and metalworking activities. Some slaves are blacksmiths; they are occasionally mentioned along with their master, who is also known as a blacksmith. Or they appear without mention of their master, and seem to enjoy greater autonomy. Others, especially slaves of the god, appear among the beneficiaries of land distribution; in certain cases, on the lists of beneficiaries, their names even appear next to those of hierarchically important individuals—priests and priestesses, for instance, or civil servants. Other lists, such as the religious association in honor of Poseidon, also mention slaves next to non-slaves.

Finally, a tablet from Pylos gives evidence of the existence of slaves born of unions between slaves and also, probably, of unions between

slaves and non-slaves. In the latter case, the texts mention, for instance, “mother slave, father blacksmith,” but never refer to the non-slave as “free.” In fact, in Mycenaean society, the term *ereutero* (*ēleuthēros*, “free”) is never used to designate a social condition.

Certain historians have sought to liken this slavery to the traditional forms of dependency. No available evidence allows us to draw a firm conclusion. However, the mention of purchases and the existence of names of geographic origins point in the direction of slavery. There are insufficient criteria for determining if the possession of slaves is reserved for the social elite. On the other hand, relations exist between slaves and non-slaves, and it is possible for slaves to access land, thanks to their integration into the royal household or into the religious domain. These two facts preclude the assimilation of these slaves to ones living in a slave society, but they approach the situation described in Homeric epic.

The Ninth and Eighth Centuries BCE: The Homeric Poems

The epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which form the beginnings of Greek literature, constitute, in a literary genre totally different from that of the Linear B tablets, an equally precious source of information about slavery in ancient Greece. Debate about the historical interpretation of these poems, which was already very intense in Antiquity, still divides specialists today. Nevertheless, whatever the respective dates of these two poems and the order of their composition, we consider that in them Homer (or the poets who were given that name) described historical society of the ninth and eighth centuries in Greece—that is to say, society from the beginning of the archaic period, some four centuries later than the Mycenaean sources. The fact that Homer wrote in a particular literary genre, epic, is not insignificant: the work proposes a model of a lifestyle, whose principal mode of activity is war.

The distinctiveness of vocabulary relevant to slavery compared to terminology in later Greek is striking. To be sure, the family of words based on *doulos*, is used, but very rarely: *doulos* appears only two times in Homer, and only in the feminine form *doulè* (reference is made to a female *doulè* who marries a free man: *Iliad* 3.409 and *Odyssey* 4.12).² Moreover, slavery is considered to be a specific form of submission, of *doulosynè*, that is marked by “fear” (*Odyssey* 14.59), and that one must learn to “tolerate” (*Odyssey* 22.423).

The most common word by far is *dmôs*, which is rarely used outside of the works of Homer and Hesiod (who were more or less contemporaries). *Dmôs* coexists with other terms referring to statuses whose exact meanings we are unable to determine. This abundance of terms links Homer to later sources, for in this terminology, free and non-free persons are mixed, designated by words that apply to diverse types of servants and domestics: for instance, in the case of women, *oikeus* and *amphipolos*; for men, *drester* and *thērapôn*. *Thērapôn*, whose meaning is much broader, is in a somewhat separate category, since it also applies to members of the Homeric aristocracy—such as Patroclus, who “serves” Achilles and has become his *hētairos*, companion, after having taken refuge in his court. The *thērapôn* plays an essential role at banquets: he cuts the meat or mixes the wine and water in containers. This is also what important slaves do at the court of Odysseus; Melanthius for the suitors, and Eumaeus and Philoetius, the two men who are rewarded for their loyalty in the last book of the *Odyssey*.

While the etymology of *dmôs* is disputed, the word most probably comes from the verb *damaô*, to capture. Its recurrence in the epic is better understood in the light of this origin. Indeed, slavery is initially tied to capturing, in the course of war or in an act of violence. The *doulion èmar*, the “day of slavery,” is the day of capture, and not that of purchase; it is the opposite of the *ēleuthēron èmar*, the “day of liberty,” when one had freedom (*Iliad* 6.455). When Eumaeus tells his life story, he starts his narrative with the “day of slavery” and its consequences. Even when the slave was bought after his capture, it is the capture itself that counts for more, that is, the enslavement and the coercion that comes with it: “ ‘Zeus, the Old Thunderer, robs a man of half his virtue the day the yoke clamps down around his neck’ ” (*Odyssey* 17.323). Capture therefore constitutes a major event that leads to submission and marks the beginning of a new life.

For this new condition signals the loss of one of man’s qualities: military valor, the attribute of the freeborn man. Even a fallen man who has become a poor beggar, like Odysseus coming back from Ithaca incognito, can, because he is freeborn, propose a competition in agricultural activities and in battle (*Odyssey* 18.366–83). The right to engage in military activity is not regained by the slave until he is rewarded and has had his status enhanced by the master. This is the case of Philoetius and of Eumaeus, who are rewarded by Odysseus at the end of the *Odyssey*. The status of the slave is seemingly not the lowest in the social hierarchy, if one believes Achilles when he alludes to his rank after death. “By god, I’d rather slave on earth for another man—some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—than rule down here over all the breathless dead” (*Odyssey* 11.489–91).

Achilles does not, however, say that the situation of the slave is superior to that of the poorest of freeborn men, who is forced to work for others. In fact, he evokes the social hierarchy as it exists in normal times, when there is no social “accident.” Slavery is that accident; it represents a fundamental rupture of which Achilles is not thinking in this context.

Slave owners are almost exclusively members of the aristocracy, the *kings* of the city, whose warrior role greatly enhances their status; this is why capture is often presented as the point of origin for slavery. In Egypt, the Greeks “promptly began to plunder the lush Egyptian farms, dragged off the women and children, killed the men” (*Odyssey* 14.264–65). The best-known slave in the *Odyssey* is a captured child, Eumaeus. Philoetius is also captured as a child (*Odyssey* 20.210). As to adult men who are taken prisoner, a ransom demand signals humanity; otherwise, they are executed. Women are subjected to a different fate: they are captured and become the bed partner (*alochos*) of their new master; it is in this manner that Briseis is given to Achilles (*Iliad* 19.297). Or they meet with the fate that threatens Andromache: “That is nothing, nothing beside your agony when some brazen Argive hales you off in tears, wrenching away your day of light and freedom! Then far off in the land of Argos you must live, laboring at a loom, at another woman’s beck and call, fetching water at some spring” (*Iliad* 6.454–57). The two conditions are not incompatible. These warrior customs indicate a likely numerical predominance of female slavery, the few male slaves having been captured as children.

The primacy given to capture does not mean that there were not also commercial transactions. This is what Achilles says when summing up his life: “Before Patroclus met his day of destiny, true, it warmed my heart a bit to spare some Trojans; droves I took alive and auctioned off as slaves” (*Iliad* 21.99). All the slaves in the *Odyssey* whose names and histories we know have been bought or are the descendants of slaves who have been bought. The purchase of slaves is all the more important since, strangely enough, manumission is totally absent from the Homeric texts. When Eumaeus evokes the ideal future he would have had if his master had lived and had rewarded him, one would expect him to mention manumission. This is not the case: “But my old king? The gods, they must have blocked his journey home. He’d have treated me well, he would, with a house, a plot of land and a wife you’d gladly prize. Goods that a kind lord will give a household hand who labors for him, hard, whose work the gods have sped, just as they speed the work I labor at all day” (*Odyssey* 14.61–65).

Manumission only has a social meaning if the slave is clearly defined as a non-free person; in that case a powerful break is required

to mark the change of status. In the Homeric world, the break takes place earlier, that is, when the slave is no longer a prisoner of war and his ankles are unshackled. Indeed, in the classical period, the notion of manumission is conveyed by the verb *luēin*, to untie. Because for a master, to let the captive live, either by keeping him or by selling him, is to “untie” him, that is, in a certain way, to *free* him from death.³

Minted coins are unknown to Homeric society, which uses “multiple moneys”: depending on the circumstances, a collection of objects can be both product and means of exchange without these functions being either exclusive or contradictory. The slave is therefore bought with the goods that one possesses (*ktēassī*). In the absence of examples of such transactions, it is impossible to say much more about them. When Achilles speaks of possessions in general terms, he lists oxen, sheep, horses, tripods (objects of bronze or iron) (*Iliad* 9.400). These are probably so many “monies” that can be exchanged for slaves; moreover, the Achaeans buy wine from Lemnos “some with bronze and some with gleaming iron, some with hides, some with whole live cattle, some with slaves” (*Iliad* 7.472–75). Thus, the slave himself becomes a circulating good and can be used as a means of exchange. The value of goods exchanged is calculated in numbers of oxen. From this point of view, the value of the slave varies extraordinarily, since, according to available examples, it fluctuates between 1 and 25, from 4 to 100 oxen.

But transactions involving slaves are not all comparable; they do not all have the same function. Prices vary according to the social origins of the slave and to the sphere of exchange of goods to which he belongs. Eurycleia, a slave of Odysseus’s father, Laertes, comes from a “good family”: she is the daughter of Ops and the granddaughter of Pisenor; she was thus traded for twenty oxen (*Odyssey* 1.429), a considerable sum.

But the greatest values are attached to the ransom and buying back of captives from aristocratic families. These two possibilities are evoked indirectly by the prophet Calchas, who demands his daughter’s freedom without a transaction: “... not till they give back the girl with sparkling eyes to her loving father—no price [*apriatè*], no ransom [*anapoīnon*] paid—” (*Iliad* 1.99). It is worth noting that a precious metal like silver appears in only one case of ransom: the buying back of the nobleman Lycaon, captured by Patroclus, calls for a silver mixing bowl. “Nothing could match its beauty—a masterpiece that skilled Sidonian craftsmen wrought to perfection, Phoenician traders shipped across the misty seas and mooring in Thoas roads, presented to the king. Euneus son of Jason gave it to Prince Patroclus. The ransom paid to release Lycaon, Priam’s son” (*Iliad* 23.742–47). It is

worth a hundred oxen and stands of course at the top of the hierarchy of goods (*Iliad* 21.80).

In the absence of numerical assessments we are unable to estimate the number of slaves that were owned. Odysseus declares: “And crowds of servants I had, and lots of all it takes to live the life of ease” (*Odyssey* 17.422). The most accurate data we have relate to Odysseus, king of Ithaca, and Alcinous, king of Phaeacia, each of whom has fifty servants (*Odyssey* 7.103 and 22.421). These round figures only represent a rough estimate, similar to the one given later by Plato, who considers that one is rich when one owns fifty slaves. But these are lower than the number that each possessed in reality, because they only refer to palace servants.

In Homer, it is possible to identify a division of tasks. Women are “trained in all jobs,” in domestic work, in weaving and in milling: “now twelve women in all performed their tasks, grinding the wheat and barley, [...]. The rest were abed by now—they milled their stint—this one alone, the frailest of all, kept working on” (*Odyssey* 20.107–10). The men devote themselves to agricultural work and to raising livestock, but they also play a role in the preparation of festivals and banquets. Often the lady of the house organizes and personally supervises the work of the women, in close collaboration with one of them: Eurynome, the housekeeper, is very close to Penelope; together they prepare Odysseus’s bed (*Odyssey* 18.158–76 and 23.289). As for Eurycleia, the old nurse of Odysseus, who was bought by Laertes, she works with the men of the household; she goes to the loft of the father and takes care of Telemachus (*Odyssey* 1.430 and 2.237).

The world of slaves is organized according to a strict hierarchy. On Odysseus’s estate, Melanthius is the master goatherd, Philoetius the master cowherd, Eumaeus the master swineherd, while Dolius takes care of the trees. Eumaeus has four swineherds under his command (*Odyssey* 14.24). These slaves act as intermediaries between the master or mistress and the other slaves (*Odyssey* 18.182). Presented in this way, the division of tasks often serves as a reminder of the social order. The slaves who have the most important functions are often descended from high social origins before their capture: Eumaeus is the son of a king; Eurycleia is the daughter of a nobleman, as is the wet nurse of Eumaeus of Syros, who comes from an important family of Sidon (*Odyssey* 1.429; 15.413 and 426).

Moreover, in the epic, the servile social stratum does not have an independent existence. Slaves almost never speak among themselves,⁴ and male and female slaves even less to each other.⁵ On the other hand, they are in contact with their mistresses, something that is presented as a necessity: “Servants miss it, terribly, gossiping back and

forth with the mistress, gathering scraps of news, a snack and a cup or two, then taking home to the fields some little gift. It never fails to cheer a servant's heart" (*Odyssey* 15.376–79). Men and women of different statuses can thus experience a certain proximity within the estate: Eumaeus has lived his entire youth in the company of Ctimene, eldest daughter of Laertes the king, and he takes part in the religious celebrations (*Odyssey* 14.435 and 15.363–65). The house of Laertes, father of Odysseus, is almost a model of social integration; the king, who is close to his slaves, proves to be exceptionally abstinent because he does not have sexual relations with a favorite slave such as Eurycleia (*Odyssey* 11.188 and 16.140–41). This is obviously far from being the case elsewhere: the twelve servants of Odysseus sleep with the suitors and will be punished on the return of their master (*Odyssey* 20.5–30 and 22.457–73). The female slave in Homer projects an image of sexual vulnerability that is much greater than that of the freeborn woman. This situation represents a source of social instability in aristocratic households: sometimes conflicts break out with respect to the choice of slaves as concubines.⁶

What is the future of the slave who is faithful to his master? Old Dolius takes care of the trees of the estate after his "retirement" and lives close to Laertes. He has a wife, the mother of his children Melanthius and Melantho (*Odyssey* 24.205 ff.). This, we have seen, is what Eumaeus had hoped for if Odysseus had been present; Odysseus has most certainly succeeded in acquiring a slave who helps him (*Odyssey* 14.452). But Eumaeus's dream is in the end fulfilled; the long-awaited decision arrives at the end of the epic, rewarding the loyalty of Eumaeus and Philoetius: Odysseus proclaims, "I'll find you wives, both of you, grant you property, sturdy houses beside my own, and in my eyes you'll be comrades to Prince Telemachus, brothers from then on" (*Odyssey* 21.214–16).

Despite the gaps in our knowledge, the Homeric epic provides a fairly clear idea of slavery in Greece at the beginning of the archaic period. The distinction between slavery and the contemporaneous statuses of servitude and dependency is admittedly not discernable. In fact, in the epic, the extraordinary importance given to war as a means of creating and conserving wealth is not the only privilege of the slave owner; servitude also glorifies the valor of the master, as a sixth-century aristocratic Cretan song attests: "My great weal is my lance and sword and my goodly shield, defence for the body. With these I plough, with these I reap, with these I tread out the sweet wine from the vine, through these I am hailed as master of serfs."⁷ In the epic, however, the insistence on purchase leaves no doubt: it is indeed slaves that are being referred to. Homeric society is similar in this way to the

Mycenaean period as well as to the late archaic period: it is a society “with slaves,” but not a slave society. An element of proof is the possibility for social advancement clearly offered to the slave, in the context of a privileged relationship with his master and of the personal ties the latter creates around him. This essential aspect (which existed perhaps already in the Mycenaean period, although we know nothing about it) is apparent, symbolically, in the absence of manumission.

We should not infer, however, that in this system, which could be characterized as “patriarchal,” the living conditions of Homeric slaves were pleasant or idyllic. Probably nothing could be more misleading. One must not rule out the possibility that one of the functions of the poem is precisely to convey a message of social integration in a world where masters and slaves are united, provided that the latter are faithful. But the attitudes of slaves prove to be greatly varied. The rejection of servitude and the desire for flight are indeed present, as Demeter, disguised as a mortal, bears witness: “Dos is my name [...] pirates kidnapped me [...] but my heart did not desire food sweet as honey. Surreptitiously I stole away and disappeared into the dark earth, fleeing those arrogant captors and depriving them of the price at which they would have sold me without having bought me.”⁸ Moreover, even if the society of the epic seems marked by uncertainty in legal thinking, we hasten to add that Homeric slavery is a transitory phenomenon that anticipates the emergence of the city, the polis, and the establishment of a complete and “definitive” status of the slave. The development that turns Greek society toward a slave society is weightier and more complex. It is this development that we observe in embryonic form starting in the seventh century BCE.

The Seventh and Sixth Centuries BCE: The Birth in Greece of a Slave Society

With the Homeric poems as our starting point, our knowledge of the archaic period is enriched, beginning in the seventh century BCE, by poetic works that have survived, most often in a very fragmentary state. The condition of these sources makes it difficult to interpret a period that is nevertheless essential in the transformation of slavery. Indeed, the vocabulary of that time becomes that of the classical period, with a pre-eminence of words from the *doulos* family. The word *dmōs*, still found in the poems of Hesiod, who was very close in time to Homer, disappears and is not seen again until the fifth century, in tragedies, with reference to the epic. The first allusions to the lives of “real” slaves also come from the world of literature.

Archilochus, in Paros, is the son of a nobleman, Telesicles, and of a slave, Enipo. Alcman is presented, in Sparta, as a slave, probably of Lydian origin; he is, in the late seventh century, the first freed slave we know of: “Alcman was the slave of Agesidas (or Agesilaus) and, as he was witty [*euphuēs*], he was freed and became a poet” (Aristotle, frag. 611.9). Finally, the fabulist Aesop is of Thracian origin and ends up a slave in Samos (Herodotus, *The Histories*, 2.134).

From this period on, slavery undergoes an important transformation, first and foremost because of the rapid expansion of commerce.

In fact, the innovation is major: slaves are bought with money, according to Athenaeus, who quotes the fourth-century Greek historian Theopompus—the first to distinguish between servitude and slavery, as we saw in chapter 1. “The first Greeks, so far as I know, who made use of purchased slaves [*argyrōnetois doulois*] were the Chians,” writes Theopompus in the seventeenth book of his *Histories*. “The Chians were the first Greeks, after the Thessalians and Lacedaemonians, to use slaves, but they did not acquire them in the same way. [...]. But the slaves whom the Chians own are derived from the non-Greek peoples, and they pay a price for them.”⁹

Thus the historical novelty here is not the buying of slaves—which, as we have seen, has existed for a long time—but the fact that the purchase is made *with money*; from then on, slaves can be called *argyrōnetoi*. This word only appears in the classical period and even then is used relatively rarely; besides slaves, it designates, in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, another commodity bought with money: a purple carpet, which is closely associated with the Orient. Through Athenaeus, Theopompus thus provides us with a precious account of the transformation of the means of exchange in Greece during the seventh century. Indeed, in the Homeric period, money played no role in everyday exchanges; it was an instrument for hoarding, used in exceptional cases such as the ransom of a captured nobleman. In the Near East, on the other hand, the use of money as a means of exchange is an old practice; a slave is valued in silver sicles. Now, the seventh century witnesses the development of trade between Greece and the Near East; under the influence of the latter, the Greek world begins to use money, valued according to weight, more and more frequently in exchanges. From now on—and this is the novelty to which Theopompus draws attention—slaves are bought in a regular commercial environment, and supplies come from non-Greek regions, the first of which is Asia Minor.

That this innovation should come from Chios is certainly no accident: in the fifth century Chios is the city that, according to Thucydides, has the largest number of slaves after Sparta.¹⁰

Moreover, Chios maintains important trade relations with Asia Minor, as the ceramics evidence confirms: in the second half of the sixth century, in Gordion, capital of Phrygia, ceramics from Chios are clearly more abundant than those from all other Greek cities. One of the first known slave merchants is a certain Panionios of Chios, who, at the end of the sixth century, bought slaves in Caria and, after having castrated them, resold them in Ephesus or Sardis (Herodotus, 8.105).

There are, then, numerous indications that emphasize the development of exchange activities in which slavery plays an essential role—and, of course, Chios is not the only city to be affected. Thus the Samian Xanthias leads the Thracian Rhodopis to Naucratis to work as a courtesan (Herodotus, 2.134). The oldest honorary decree to have been preserved comes from Cyzicus, a city on the coast of Phrygia, and dates back to the sixth century BCE: among other honors, the beneficiaries are exempt from paying taxes; but the “tax on the purchase of slaves” (*andrapôdoniè*) is not covered by the measure, certainly because of its importance for the revenues of the city. The Black Sea region offers the first source-material concerning slaves deriving directly from the world of commerce. We could mention, for instance, a letter written on lead from Phanagoria (circa 530–510), about the sale of a slave: “This slave [*païs*] is sent for sale from Borysthenes. His name is Phaulleus. We want to receive the whole price.”¹¹ Another letter, very difficult to read, on an *ostrakon* (a potsherd bearing an engraved inscription) comes from Olbia and dates back to the middle of the sixth century. It alludes to a shipwreck: “after the shipwreck, the slaves escaped.”¹² If these slaves were part of the cargo, and not of the crew, this letter is the oldest evidence of sea trafficking. It is obviously impossible to quantify the increase of trade and the role of slavery in it. But the reality of the phenomenon is confirmed, and this is the essential point. The conditions for the development of slavery through purchase, to meet the needs of the elite of a city, are satisfied, with commercial trade being added to the traditional spoils of wars and raids. “Bought at the market” becomes an additional piece of information, which defines, for instance, the financial responsibility of the person who bought a slave at the market; in Crete, in the fifth century, the Gortyn lawcode distinguishes in this way between the slave and the dependent (7.10–15).

The Archaic Crisis and Slavery

This phenomenon is not trivial, and it is impossible that it did not play a role in the major social upheaval at the beginning of the sixth

century. The “archaic crisis,” as it is often called, is marked by the ever-increasing rate of enslavement for debt. These enslavements affected the poorest, whose status of dependency was probably traditional, and who were called *hektēmoroi* in Athens. Consequently Solon applies himself to voiding debt slavery in Attica; it is, moreover, he who gave the best description of this complex situation, in his poems quoted by Aristotle, where he summarizes his own action in Athens: “And many sold away I did bring home to god-built Athens, this one sold unjustly, that other justly; others that had fled [...] and others suffering base slavery even here, [...], I did set free.”¹³ Contrary to what some historians have thought, in that period enslavement does not necessarily lead to a sale abroad. Those who had gone abroad a long time ago probably fled (moreover the text uses the verb *pheugeîn*, to flee). The verb that describes the action of Solon, *anageîn*, “I restored,” is the precursor to the procedure of *anagôgê*—well known, starting in the classical period, in transactions relative to slavery, and which consists in voiding the sale in cases of misdeed or fraud.

This situation is not limited to the Athenians. At around the same period in Corinth, the tyrant Periander, known more generally for his moderate decisions, promulgates a law that seems very strange to the Greeks of the classical period: “he forbids citizens to acquire slaves” (Nicolaus of Damascus, *FgrH*, 90, frag. 58). Following the Greek writers, some authors have interpreted this law as behavior that is characteristic of the tyrant, who wants to forbid laziness in citizens and encourages them to work in order to prevent them from taking an interest in politics and from opposing him. But the law can also be interpreted in a manner more in keeping with the social reality of the period, as a ban on the purchase of debt slaves, following the example of Athens. Since the purchase of slaves had become widespread practice among the elite as trade developed, the enslavement of fellow-Greeks posed a major social and political problem that many Greek cities resolved by the banning pure and simple of debt enslavement and of civil imprisonment.

Henceforth purchased slaves will be foreigners in the city where they live. The historian Moses I. Finley applied himself to the delicate task of interpreting this essential turning point in Greek society: that is, the end of the system of debt slavery and the emergence of commercial slavery, made up henceforth of non-Greeks (at least in Athens and other neighboring cities): “My thesis is the following: logically the demand for slaves precedes the supply.”¹⁴ According to him, this demand for slaves has three reasons: private property, which at that time is undergoing a certain degree of concentration, requires an extra-familial workforce; trade and the markets develop sufficiently

to allow for the purchase, henceforth necessary, of slaves; finally, there is a critical shortage of internal labor, following the laws of Solon that promulgate the suppression of the *hektēmoroi*.

So the wealthy turn to external slave labor. Why? The decision of Solon, Finley continues, was “imposed not by those who needed a workforce, but by those Athenians whom they sought to hire,” namely the people, who did not want to work for the rich. The choice of slaves as a workforce is therefore not, in the end, based on calculations of profitability, but on political pressure.

This reconstruction, which is often accepted, is nevertheless debatable. I. Morris deems Finley’s position to be inconsistent: if Finley bases himself on the existence of a true working market, at the same time he considers the market to be ineffective, since decisions are made according to criteria of an entirely different nature.¹⁵ It is not at all certain that “demand precedes supply,” nor that the Athenians waited until the end of debt slavery before buying slaves. The theory of Finley denies the exceptional novelty represented by the growing possibility of buying slaves in a world where markets did not exist for all products. To be sure, the end of debt slavery led the elite to take an interest in new sources of labor; but slavery was already widespread and it is not certain that in Athens there were more slaves shortly after Solon’s reforms than before— when the *hektēmoroi* could be turned into slaves in massive numbers. Rather than stemming from Solon’s measures, commercial slavery precedes them.

The strongest indication of this is the existence, as early as Solon’s time, of a very important body of laws on slavery. Legislation is needed to settle the serious social problems that the development of slavery brings in its wake. What then do these laws specify? An important question. They separate, for the first time in the city, the slave from other social categories, and in particular from citizens. The slave is forbidden to participate in the activities of the gymnasium; only the elite citizen is deemed worthy. Homosexual relations between slaves and young citizens are also prohibited (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.138–39). This last measure aims at forbidding the familiarity that developed in ancient slavery, when, as the Homeric text shows, the slave of the household could become the companion, the *hētairos*, of the nobleman. The economic dimension of slavery is also subject to legislation: “He [Solon] knew that sales are constantly taking place in the city and passed a law, which everyone admits to be just, stating that any offences or crimes committed by a slave shall be the responsibility of the master who owns him at the time.”¹⁶ The slave is clearly considered the property of the master; henceforth he is an owned good, a *ktēma*. This represents a rupture, at least from a legal point of view, with earlier slavery. The reaction was obviously

provoked by the conjunction of two phenomena: the development of the purchasing of foreign slaves and the massive enslavement of the indebted population. The suppression of debt slavery accentuates the social gap between citizen and slave—who must be as different as possible from this “liberated” citizen.

Thus, the seventh and sixth centuries witness the introduction, in a good many Greek cities, of the two measures without which Greek society could not, up to then, be considered a slave society: regular supplies from a slave market and a legal standing of the slave that is clearly defined in relation to the freeborn men of the city.

Archaic Rome as Seen by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Rome’s archaic period, which corresponds to the first centuries of its history, begins at the time of the city’s founding, that is, according to Latin tradition, in 754 BCE. And it is often considered to have ended at the beginning of the fourth century, in 390, the year of the sack of Rome by the Gauls. But with respect to slavery, it is only in the course of the fourth century BCE that Rome experiences the important developments that took place two or three centuries earlier in archaic Greece: the establishment of a regular slave market and a legal standing of the slave clearly defined in relation to that of the freeborn and freed men of the city. In this book, we therefore consider that the archaic period lasts until the fourth century, but without attempting to date its end more precisely.

In the course of these three and a half centuries, Rome experienced prosperous periods, but also defeats and times of withdrawal. Between its founding and 509 BCE, it was ruled, according to Latin tradition, by seven kings. The sixth century BCE, which, according to ancient authors, experienced the reign of three Etruscan kings—Tarquinius Priscus (616–578), Servius Tullius (578–535) and Tarquinius Superbus (535–509)—was certainly the great period of Rome’s archaic history. After the fall of the kings, in the first century of the Republic (fifth century), its power diminished and various internal crises between the elite (the patriciate) and the rest of the citizens (the plebeians) divided the city: during the fifth century, the patricians, whose ancestors, it was said, dated back to the founding of Rome, forbade the plebeians to have access to the city’s magistracies.

This remote period of Roman history is very poorly known to us. In addition to literary texts that were written several centuries later, there are some fragments of legal texts (fragments of the Laws of Twelve Tables, written in 451–449 BCE), some inscriptions and, above

all, increasingly abundant archaeological evidence, which, for the past half-century, has made it possible to expand our knowledge and to revise our questions.

Because the textual evidence dates almost entirely from later centuries, there is always the question of determining to what extent the Latins of later periods, between the fourth and the first centuries BCE, reconstructed certain structures and events whose traces we still have only through their mediation—and about which they themselves probably had only very fragmentary information. Between the two World Wars and during the 1960s, a historiographic tendency that has been described as “hypercritical,” and which dates back to the eighteenth century, was characterized by a very strong distrust of ancient texts relating to the archaic period. The goal was to determine the objectives for which archaic history had been reconstructed during the last centuries of the common era: the civic pride of the Romans, who wanted to find premonitory signs of their greatness in the first decades of their city’s history; the family pride of the important lineages of the nobilitas, concerned with glorifying the actions of their purported ancestors; influence of the political struggles of the end of the Republic or of certain episodes of Greek history, etc. Since the 1960s–1970s, there is an effort to rely on the preserved literary and legal texts, whose content has been confirmed more than once by archeological finds. The manner in which Roman archaic history is presented has thus changed considerably over the past thirty years.¹⁷

The literary texts that have been transmitted to us refer quite often to slaves with respect to the archaic period. Without suggesting that slavery played a very important social and political role in those times, they do allude to it relatively frequently.

Certain texts refer to slaves collectively. The historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes that, even before the foundation of the city, Numitor chased Amulius from his throne with the help of friends, clients, and slaves (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.83.3 and 1.85). Then, when Romulus, the founder of Rome and its first king (754–715), decides to make it a place of refuge (in order to increase its population), many rush there, according to Livy, slaves as well as freeborn men (Livy, *Roman History*, 1.8.6). Romulus then decrees that freeborn men can only take charge of agriculture and war; the other occupations and crafts, considered unworthy of citizens, will be reserved for slaves and foreigners (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.28.1). Later, under the reign of the sixth king of Rome, Servius Tullius, Dionysius alludes again, on several occasions, to slaves.¹⁸ Still later, when “the Tarquins,” the family of the seventh and last king, Tarquinius Superbus, had been chased from the city,

Rome found itself at war with the king Porsenna of Clusium; slaves, livestock and all other riches were then taken from the countryside to fortified places, so that the enemy could not seize them (Dionysius, 5.22.1). Some twenty years later, in 492–491, a food shortage was raging, and Livy points out that if the city had not acquired wheat from outside of its territory, many slaves as well as plebeians would have starved to death (Livy, 2.34.3). Similarly, during the fifth century, in 463, 451, and 425 BCE, several epidemics claimed victims among the poor and the slaves, or among peasants and slaves (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 9.67.2 and 10.53.1; Livy, 4.30).

The vocabulary used in these allusions to all of the slaves is not without importance. Indeed, if Dionysius and Livy often use the most common words of their times to designate slaves (*doulos* in Greek, *servus* in Latin), one also finds other less banal words: the collective *servitia*, for instance, which appears several times in Livy, is not as frequent when it is a question of slaves at the end of the Republic or during the Principate. Still, in Livy, the term *famulus*, servant, orients the reader toward domestic slaves—as does, moreover, *thērapôn*, in Dionysius. Referring in these ways to the entire body of slaves was perhaps meant to suggest that they were not exactly like the slaves of the classical period.

It also happens (although rarely) that the Latin author evokes individual slaves by name. The king Servius Tullius, for instance, is considered by certain ancient authors, and in particular by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, to be the son of an enslaved captive, Ocrisia (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 4.1.2–3).¹⁹ More-over, in 509 BCE, after having been expelled, the Tarquins tried to foment a plot in Rome to retake the throne, with the help of certain Etruscan cities. The plot was discovered by the slave Vindicius, who exposed it to the consuls (Livy, 2.4.5 and 2.4.10); we will come back to this Vindicius a bit farther on, regarding the subject of manumission “by the rod” (*manumissio vindicta*).

War is presented as the only source of slavery in the archaic period. The texts of Livy and Dionysius tend to show that the enslavement of prisoners of war dates from the regal period and that slavery increased in scale from that period on (Livy, 1.35.1–2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.16.1). Livy writes that originally, the habit was neither to enslave the prisoners nor to kill them, but to take them to Rome and give them Roman citizenship. According to Dionysius, it is Romulus who introduced this custom. Under the fourth king of Rome, Ancus Marcius, the Latin city of Politorium was taken by storm by the Romans, and its population, once again, was transferred to Rome and received citizenship. According to Livy, the objective was to increase Rome’s population. It is in this way that some quarters of Rome came

to be inhabited by non-Romans, for instance the Capitoline Hill by Sabines and the Caelian Hill by people from Alba Longa. Subsequently, under the last kings, the practice changed; henceforth captives became slaves.

Archaic Rome and Its Slaves

However frequently these allusions to slaves appear in texts relating to the archaic period, to this day they have hardly gained attention. One reason for this silence is the fact that archeology has not provided new information about this social group. In 1974, the great legal historian Francesco De Martino, who was influenced by still very strong hypercritical tendencies, went so far as to deny completely the existence of slaves in the archaic period.²⁰ He thought that slavery had spread into Rome in the fourth century BCE and that later Latin authors had then reintroduced it into their accounts of the earliest centuries of the city's history. Yet there is no lack of arguments supporting the existence of slavery; four of them seem to us to be particularly convincing.

First of all, there is the adherence of archaic slaves to a kinship group. Francesco De Martino himself noted that slaves of the archaic period are always presented as being solidly integrated into the large group of relatives and dependents that surround the master, a patrician. And he notes correctly that among these dependents, the Latin authors identify three different statuses: clients, slaves, and freedmen. But, De Martino adds, if the master had clients who in all likelihood cultivated the land, what need would there be for slaves? This simplistic argument is not persuasive, for, in several known situations of archaic Antiquity, great figures are surrounded not by a single type of dependents, but by two or three. In Etruria, a region particularly close to Rome, there seem to have been, in the Hellenistic period, several categories of dependents (clients, slaves, freedmen). Unfortunately, for the archaic period, we are not very familiar with the characteristics of the diverse statuses of dependents in Etruria, and even the number of these statuses is uncertain.²¹

An author like Dionysius, at times vague in his use of words, is interested in the differences between the status of clients and that of slaves. In his eyes there are, on the one hand, the slaves, and on the other, the dependents (mainly rural) who are not slaves, but whose lot is not always preferable to that of the slaves. Among these dependents he includes the Penestae of Thessaly, who, he writes, were very poorly treated by the Thessalian elite, as well as the popular sphere of the Etruscan cities (Dionysius, 2.9.2 and 9.5.4). These rural dependents

were halfway between slaves and clients. In Rome, Romulus is supposed to have organized the city much better by requiring the plebeians (citizens of the city who were not part of the patrician class) to become the clients of the patricians, while giving each of them the right to choose his patron (Dionysius, 2.9.2–2.11). It is institutions like these that, according to Dionysius, allowed Rome to experience social cohesion, despite the inequalities, for six centuries—until the period of the Gracchi. However Rome was organized in the eighth or seventh century, we think that a text like this one implies the existence of both clients and slaves.

This close and constant linking of the archaic slaves to the fate of the *gens* offers another argument supporting the historicity of the data concerning them. For this is a phenomenon that is specific to slavery of the archaic epoch as compared to classical slavery, the characteristics of which take shape clearly starting in the fourth century. In fact, the situations surrounding revolts or troubles reveal a striking evolution in the behavior of slaves across the centuries. Before the fourth century, the slaves rise up four times. As told by Livy and Dionysius, the first three insurrections, between 501 and 499 BCE and again in 460 BCE, as are indisputably controlled by great figures—the Tarquins between 501 and 499 and the Sabine Appius Herdonius in 460.²² Only the fourth is presented as a true slave revolt, like those of the second and first centuries BCE: the insurgents want to set fires in several places, summon the other slaves to liberty, kill the masters and seize their wives and riches. Thus the three preceding insurrections reveal a type of collective servile violence among the *gens* of the master, aimed at assuring his victory; this type of violence will tend to disappear subsequently, or at least will lose much of its importance.

A third argument concerns war, which throughout Antiquity constituted one of the sources of slavery. In the texts on the archaic period, however, war appears as its only source: there is never talk of trafficking or of slave trade. There were, to be sure, other, less important means of assuring supplies: the overseas purchase, outside of Roman territory, beyond the Tiber (*trans Tiberim*), of certain convicts and of insolvent debtors; and probably also piracy. In the texts, the archaic slave remains nonetheless a prisoner of war.

Finally, there are the texts of the Law of the Twelve Tables, a code written between 451 and 449 BCE, fragments of which have been transmitted by later authors. Five modern editions of these fragments are worth consulting. The most recent, supervised by M. H. Crawford, is remarkable, even if it is very “critical” of certain fragments of the Law of Twelve Tables.²³

These fragments contain four dispositions concerning slaves. Manumission was possible for men as well as for women. In the case

of testamentary manumission, in return for payment to the heir, the slave had to be freed, even if the heir sold him; in that case, the money from the manumission had to be paid to the buyer. If a former slave died intestate, without heir, his estate went back to his former master. Finally, in the case of theft, if the guilty person was a slave, he had to be executed; if he was a free man, on the other hand, he was handed over to the victim; the two categories were thus not equal regarding the punishment of the offences.

To be sure, it is not at all certain that these four dispositions were written in so many words in the Twelve Tables. For instance, the clause concerning testamentary manumission is anachronistic in the eyes of many legal historians. But it seems to us impossible to refute the authenticity of these four texts and therefore, as Francesco De Martino does, to deny the existence of slavery in the middle of the fifth century: it existed in Rome and among the Latins as far back as the regal period—we would say as far back as the founding of the city, and maybe even earlier. This does not mean that it was, at that time, a social phenomenon of primary importance; but it did exist.

How many of these slaves were there? The evidence offers very little information. Knowing that nearly the sole source of slavery was war and that the victors obviously won more slaves than the vanquished, the numbers must have varied considerably from generation to generation. According to this logic, there would have been more slaves in Rome in the sixth century than in the fifth. Can more be said? As for us, we would stress the small number of slaves in these periods, without venturing an unfounded estimate.

When did manumission appear? The classical period has three ways of manumitting, three procedures that allow for freeing slaves legally. One of them is “by the rod” (*vindicta*)—a fictitious trial to which the master and the slave consent and at the close of which the judge pretends to recognize that the man or the woman in question was already free beforehand. Manumission can also be obtained at the time of the census: with the consent of the master, the former slave is registered on the list of citizens. Finally, there is the possibility of freeing one or several slaves in one’s will (by testament). Livy only gives information on manumission through *vindicta*; established in 509 BCE, this procedure gets its name from the first slave that it was said to have compensated: Vindicium, who had denounced a plot by the Tarquins aimed at recapturing their throne (Livy, 2.4.5 and 2.5.10).²⁴

As for testamentary manumission, despite its being confirmed in the Twelve Tables, many specialists doubt that it existed as early as the

middle of the fifth century. Others think that it was instituted precisely by the Twelve Tables, thus supplementing the two other existing forms of manumission.²⁵ Still others, like M. Kaser, conclude that none of these three modalities had appeared before the period of the Twelve Tables.²⁶ In our opinion, manumission existed already in the time of the Tarquins, the “Etruscan kings,” in the sixth century, even before the appearance of these three “classical” forms of manumission, which were probably instituted in the second half of the sixth century BCE, or in the course of the fifth century.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus is very interested in how the former slave of a citizen becomes a citizen immediately upon being freed. This reform (which claims that the slave of a citizen himself becomes a citizen at the time of his manumission) constitutes an important innovation of the Roman city. Dionysius attributes it to the Etruscan king Servius Tullius, known for his populist tendencies (Dionysius, 4.22–24). He therefore considers it to be older than Livy does.

What were the roles of slaves? The ancient authors have left general notes about the division of tasks among the different segments of society. According to Dionysius, in the eyes of Romulus, only war and agriculture were befitting of citizens; other activities (handicrafts and commercial activities, in particular) were only suitable for foreigners in the city or for slaves. In another passage, he writes on the contrary that at the same period the plebeians worked in agriculture and handicrafts, while the patricians shared with the king the exercise of power (Dionysius, 2.28.1 and 2.9.1–2). These theoretical reflections, some of which come from Aristotle and others part of Roman post-archaic traditions, are very interesting for the history of philosophical and social ideas; but they teach us nothing about the daily existence of archaic slaves, for they are far removed from the “fabric of concrete reality.”²⁷

It is certain that a considerable number of slaves were domestics; and it is mainly to them that the ancient authors allude for these periods. Others might have been appointed to cultivate the land: if Livy almost never refers to this category of slaves, Dionysius of Halicarnassus by contrast does so regularly.²⁸ Is it because he is attempting to backdate to the origins of Rome a practice (land cultivation by slaves) that spread considerably between the fourth and the second centuries BCE? In any event, peasant slaves surely represented no more than a small minority—among both slaves and peasants. Finally, it is not impossible either that certain slaves were workers or craftsmen, as was the case in Etruria.²⁹

Because the archaic slave was much more integrated into the household and the relationships of his master than the slave of the

classical period, certain historians consider that his condition was quite bearable: “The slave of the ancient period lives on familiar terms with his master and no doubt leads a hard and precarious life, but close enough to that of his master.”³⁰ Further-more, he had to be sold much less often than the slave of the classical period. Certainly the city organized the sale of prisoners of war. These sales, which occurred several times in the fifth century BCE according to Dionysius, sometimes took place at actual battle locations, sometimes later, at the time of the triumphal celebrations, in Rome.³¹ But, since neither slave trade nor slave merchants seemed to exist yet, the citizens rarely put back on sale the slaves they had acquired in this way. Undoubtedly most of the time the slave stayed with the same master until his death, something that may have earned him a “privileged” status ...

The slave of the archaic period can be distinguished from other forms of dependency by the following characteristic: he is always a stranger, he is never a slave in his own city (save in exceptional and abnormal cases). But is this not the very definition of slavery? Henri Levy-Bruhl formulated the converse: “Every slave is a stranger, every stranger is a slave.”³² Must we accept this extreme thesis, which exercised a strong influence, but which is not adhered to by all? In any event, in archaic Rome, every stranger is no longer a slave. But the opposite remains true: the slave is a stranger.

This was not, on the other hand, the case of the *nexi*—those who were subjected to *nexum*, or “debt servitude.” This state of dependency created strong social tensions at the beginning of the Republic and in the fourth century BCE, before being abolished in 326 by the Lex Poetelia.³³ The insolvent debtor ran the risk, after sentencing, of being sold into slavery outside Roman territory. *Nexum*—the contract that he entered into with his creditor and by which he undertook to supply him with work—entitled him to stay in the city and, in principal, to remain a Roman citizen. But clearly, working until the repayment of his debt did not suffice; *nexum* was more often than not a permanent situation, even if the debtor was not supposed to lose his freedom forever. For the creditor, *nexum* was a way of acquiring manpower, and when he lent money, in certain cases it was probably with that precise and conscious objective in mind. Some think that already at the time of the loan, the future debtor knew the fate that awaited him and was resigned to it. Several passages in Livy and Dionysius both compare and separate *nexum* and slavery. The theme is always the same: the *nexi* complain about being treated as slaves whereas they are citizens, and have not been sold as slaves beyond the Tiber (Livy, 2.23 and 2.30; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 5.53 and 6.79)!³⁴

Passages like these prove that *nexum* is a form of dependency, but

that it should not be confused with slavery proper. Slavery existed in the Roman city from its origins. And from the time of the city's origins there was an awareness of the specificity of slavery in comparison with the other existing forms of dependency.

Thus in Rome as in Greece, slavery existed in the archaic period; it was not exactly the same as slavery of the classical period, nor could it be confused with the diverse forms of rural dependency, of "serfdom."

We have nonetheless insisted on treating these two societies separately because there is a chronological gap between them: the Roman archaic period occurs at a time when commercial, "classical," slavery, is already completely established in most Greek cities. Separately also because the evidence, which is very different in the two cases, is much richer for Greece, thanks to the Mycenaean tablets as well as the works of Homer and Hesiod. Rome does not offer such explicit sources, in spite of the presence of historians such as Livy and Dionysius. And the information relating to the other cities of Italy is unfortunately even sparser and more uncertain.

The question of manumission reveals another chronological difference between Greece and Rome. Homeric Greece seems to have been unaware of this possibility, but beginning in the seventh century, things started to evolve in this regard. As for archaic Roman slaves, they could probably be freed starting in the sixth century BCE, or in any case in the fifth century.

On the other hand, in Greece as in Rome, unlike the serf, the "rural dependent," the slave can be bought and sold, even if such transactions are much less frequent than in subsequent periods and even if there is no regular slave trade. Although in both cases the slave belongs to his master, in neither is he considered a commodity, an object, to the same extent as the classical slave. In Rome, according to the Law of the Twelve Tables, the violent death of a slave is treated as a murder; later on, on the other hand, it will represent nothing more than an attack on the master's property. However much the Greeks and Romans know, then, that after all, slaves are men and women, such an evolution is significant.

Another characteristic of these first forms of slavery concerns the fact that although social norms impose a humble status on the slave, they also give the master much greater latitude to elevate the slave above this status. Thus, in these ancient times, in contrast to the classical period, the social "promotion" of the slave depends more on the master than on society. As to the fate of the slave after manumission, there are, naturally, clear differences between classical Greece and the Roman world. But in the archaic period there are, in both cases, fewer rules preventing advancement, particularly

regarding access to marriage or to land.

With fewer slaves than in the classical era, archaic slavery also generated less social tension. These slaves show much greater solidarity with their masters, against whom they do not revolt collectively. When slaves are involved in social tensions, it is not yet about servile wars opposing slave and free, but about divisions among masters, who use their slaves as a “maneuvering mass.” This is an important point, as it structures the whole history of archaic Greece; the presence of slavery maintains a tension among members of the elite, or establishes the power of a group by expanding its role. This is probably the most visible characteristic of archaic slavery, in both Greece and Rome.

The movement to classical slavery and the appearance of a slave society take place later in Rome than in Greece. We think, nonetheless, that this transformation was achieved in more or less the same manner in Rome and in Greece. The role of debt servitude (which is one of the forms of dependency, of what we call “serfdom”) and its relations to classical slavery are, on the whole, the same in both cases. When all is said and done, and in spite of the great differences between Greece and Rome, there did indeed exist an “antique city,” which, from one end of the Adriatic to the other, presented common characteristics.

3 A SLAVE POPULATION

Demography constitutes one of the most problematic and delicate areas of ancient history, because of the absence of statistical evidence. In this field, conclusions are always tentative; there are really no givens.

It is not our intention to take stock of the methods used by historians of ancient demography and of the results they obtain. Part of our research relies on model life tables—demographic tables drawn up in the twentieth century, for instance within the framework of the United Nations, for the analysis and prediction of contemporaneous evolutions in different countries. Is an analogous use of these tables, which are supposed to present a complete range of possible situations, applicable to Greco-Roman Antiquity? While some historians rely primarily on ancient sources, others, underscoring the inadequacies of available ancient evidence, turn to model life tables. Finally, a third group tries to maintain an equal balance between the two types of approach.

The ancient cities and the Roman Empire were very preoccupied with knowing, on the one hand, the number of soldiers potentially available and, on the other, the number of taxpayers, as well as the size of their fortunes. In the Greek world, fortunes were usually assessed by the citizens themselves, and we know that slaves were part of the “invisible” fortune: they were not always declared and their numbers were underestimated. The state, at least in the case of Rome, also conducted regular population counts, referred to as the *census*. Reports of Greek censuses have not survived—with one exception from Athens.

In Rome, a largely incomplete series of the numbers of Roman citizens under the Republic and the reign of Augustus has been preserved. At the time of these censuses, not all individuals were asked to declare themselves personally: it was the fathers of families who had to make the declarations. They reported the men, women, and children who were their dependents, as well as the number of their slaves and the rest of their possessions. But it does not appear that the authorities were interested in the size of the entire population of the Empire. Moreover, nothing suggests that they had calculated, on the basis of the census, the total number of slaves living within the Empire.

Detailed demographic facts and figures available in Antiquity were therefore very partial, limited to the immediate needs of the

authorities. It was indeed important, particularly for fiscal reasons, to know to whom the slaves belonged and how many slaves each head of family owned; information on the total number of slaves, on the other hand, seemed useless.

The Number of Slaves in Athens

Historians of Greece have attempted to propose estimates of slave numbers, especially for Athens during the classical period; these assessments are numerous and contradictory, ranging from 40,000 to more than 400,000 slaves! There are two ways to address this issue: either resign ourselves to adopting an average range of academic consensus that leaves out the problems posed by certain figures in our source material; or raise questions about the means available to the ancients, in certain cases, for transmitting valid figures. We will adopt this second approach.

In *Banquet of the Learned*, Athenaeus advanced a number of comprehensive figures for the Greek world: at a given time, which is not specified except for Athens, there had been 460,000 slaves in Corinth, 470,000 in Aegina, and 400,000 in Athens (probably in 317 BCE). According to these figures, Athens accommodated a slave population that was significant but smaller than that of other cities that were actually less populated overall—a fact that is initially surprising and illogical.

How were the Greeks able to estimate the number of slaves? Besides censuses, they resorted to other methods that were probably more questionable, but the existence of which is indisputable. In particular, they could estimate a population by the amount of taxes generated by the purchases and sales of slaves. An example of that method is given to us by Xenophon, who proposes in *Ways and Means* (4.24–25) to buy on behalf of the city, for the silver mines of Laurium, three slaves per citizen, and to begin by acquiring 10,000. He then attempts to prove that the mines could easily accommodate a much higher number: “But the state will receive far more than that, as anyone will testify who is old enough to remember how much the slave labor tax brought in before the trouble at Decelea” (4.25).¹ He is probably referring to a tax on the sale of slaves. Xenophon shows that he has a method—perhaps inexact, but understandable and obvious—for undertaking a global estimate of the number of slaves. This method is based on the total amount of taxes, which could be remembered because it was put down in writing. On the basis of this amount, one could deduce an approximate number of slaves—at least the number of those who were the object of on-site transactions. This

is sufficient for Xenophon to prove, without the risk of being refuted, that in the past there had been, at Laurium, more slaves than the number he proposed to buy.

The assessments of fortunes, carried out in the framework of censuses, also made it possible to evaluate the number of slaves that citizens owned. For the Greek world, we are fortunate to have a completely exceptional testimony, thanks to Athenaeus, who himself refers to an otherwise unknown chronicler of Athens of the Hellenistic period, Ctesicles (*FgrH*, 245, frag. 1). It is a census that appears to have been carried out in Athens, in 317 BCE or in one of the following years:

Ctesicles, in the third book of his *Chronicles*, says that at Athens, during the one hundred and seventeenth Olympiad, a census of the inhabitants of Attica was taken by Demetrius of Phalerum, and the number of Athenians was found to be 21,000, of resident aliens 10,000, of slaves 400,000.²

For a long time, it was believed that these figures were mistaken, but it is now established that the manuscript tradition of this text is, on the contrary, very good, and that the text is probably paleographically correct. Proof of this lies in the fact that a large majority of historians accept these estimates for the citizens and the metics; only the number of slaves is generally rejected as being too high. As censuses, which were not really part of Athenian tradition, remain rare—when they are not simply nonexistent—this example proves to be so exceptional that it becomes subject to caution.

But one must take into account the fact that the circumstances, brought about by Demetrius of Phaleron, are exceptional in the history of the city. Indeed, this important Aristotelian philosopher, considered one of the closest disciples of Theophrastus, worked at establishing, under the aegis of the Macedonians and of Cassandra, a new oligarchy with great political ambitions: to create the conditions for a return to the ancient constitution of Solon. The heart of the new constitution is a poll tax, set at a level of wealth of 1,000 drachmas, which fully justifies a new census of the citizens. In imitation of a tradition attributed to Solon, the poorest must justify their means of earning a living and make these known to the tribunal of the Areopagus, since henceforth there are no more indemnities for civil service or participation in the people's assembly, nor is there financial

aid from the city. Anecdotes describe how the Council of the Areopagus actually controlled people's financial resources, including those of non-citizens (Athenaeus, 4.168a–b).

The new legislator must also apply the precepts of the school of Aristotle, which state the following: “the best constitution cannot be realized without suitable equipment [...]. I mean for instance in reference to number of citizens and territory. All other craftsmen, for example a weaver or a shipwright, have to be supplied with their material in a condition suitable for their trade, [...] so also the statesman and the lawgiver ought to be furnished with their proper material in suitable condition.”³ In other words, they must know the population of the city that they will rule, as well as the resources of that population.

Now, in the contemporaneous first book of the Aristotelian *Economics*, which is usually attributed to Theophrastus and is thus very close to the conceptions of Demetrius, the city-state is described as “an assemblage of houses, lands, and property.” A little further one reads the practical application of this idea: “Providing for the stock involves questions such as these: ... how is the living to be housed, and how the dead? and what accommodation are we to make for slaves and free, for women and men, for foreigners and fellow citizens?”⁴ This is the very definition of those of whom a census can be taken.

If there is, then, a moment in Athenian history when the initiative of a general census was possible, it was brought about by politicians for whom the city is a group made up not only of citizens, as tradition would have it, but of all inhabitants and their possessions. Among intellectuals, Demetrius of Phaleron, who proved to be the most faithful disciple of Theophrastus, is one of the strongest supporters of this position. We know that Demetrius will be accused by his adversaries of running the city not as a politician but as a tax collector, a *telones* farmer. This accusation, which is new in the Athenian political vocabulary, underscores the fact that he envisages the city as a sum of resources that needs to be increased.

In this no doubt exceptional historical and intellectual context in the history of the city, a census of the Athenian population is justified. Relying on the paleographic tradition, the only coherent position is therefore to assume that the census does in fact present the complete figures, namely a total of 431,000 inhabitants—while bearing in mind that, although it reflects historical reality, a margin of error is inevitable.

Whereas the meaning of the first two terms in the census, citizens and metics (or foreigners), is unambiguous, the third term presents a problem: the Greek word *oikētēs*, often used to designate a slave,

would leave out the other unlisted members of society—which is not logical. Unlike *doulos* or *andrapodon*, *oikētēs* can also refer to all members of the household, even free ones. Examples exist in our sources. Athenaeus himself presents a striking confirmation of this fact: “But that ‘domestic’ may mean anyone living in the house, even if he be a free person, is generally known.”⁵ The text of the census of 317 BCE thus reveals itself to be perfectly coherent, providing, on the one hand, the breakdown of citizens and metics based on their individual records, and on the other hand, the sum of all the other people registered in their households, according to the ideas expressed by the author of the Aristotelian *Economics*. Athenaeus’s sentence therefore translates as follows: “there was an investigation [...] conducted by Demetrius of Phaleron into the number of inhabitants in Attica, and the Athenians were found to amount to twenty-one thousand, and the metics to ten thousand, and the *people in the household* to four hundred thousand.” To designate these four hundred thousand people, the Greeks found no better term than *oikētai*, which, on the strength of tradition, Athenaeus interpreted several centuries later as meaning “slaves.” On this point, Athenaeus probably did not understand a text that was describing an exceptional operation, the details of which had been somewhat forgotten in the intervening centuries.

To Rich Cities, Many Slaves

This total of some 431,000 people is considerable, but fully in keeping with the texts of the times regarding the *polyanthrōpia* of the large Greek cities in the fourth century BCE. On the basis of customary calculations in antique demography of the number of children per family, which we will not explain here, one can reasonably infer a total of 200,000 to 250,000 slaves, that is to say about a half or slightly more of the population. This is in keeping with the other Athenian estimate available to us, the one that the orator Hyperides established before the assembly of Athens. After the defeat at Chaeronea by Philip II of Macedon in 338 BCE, Hyperides proposes, in a movement of national fervor, to mobilize and free more than 150,000 slaves who work in the mines and in the rest of the territory⁶—that is to say, adult men. As a concessionaire of mines at Laurium, Hyperides is very familiar with the issue.

Thus, the results of the survey are important and more precise than one would have expected. In the second half of the fourth century, Athens harbors a servile population that reaches or perhaps exceeds half of the entire population, and that is greater than or at least equal

to the civilian population (the citizens and their families). Pergamum probably had similar demographics in the second century CE, when, according to Galen, slaves constituted 33 percent of the population. Similarly, Agrigentum, at the height of its prosperity in the fifth century BCE, had 20,000 citizens, for a total of 200,000 people, including resident aliens (*xēnoi*) (Diodorus of Sicily, 13.84). The latter were definitely dependents, but in the case of Sicily it is impossible to distinguish between slaves and those dependents who were not slaves. One can envisage a proportion similar to that of Athens.

The figures that we have arrived at for Athens count among the high estimates. Since the eighteenth century, historians have advanced numbers that vary considerably, but that range, on average, between 60,000 and 150,000 slaves—even if some of the historians, adhering to the traditional reading of the census of Demetrius of Phaleron, have suggested very high figures (reaching as many as 400,000 slaves). The slave population is extremely variable according to historical times; the larger numbers correspond to periods of wealth in the cities in question, as Aristotle notes. It is when cities are prosperous that they buy slaves. Allowing for exceptions, this fact holds true for all periods and regions of Antiquity: slaves are brought into rich cities and regions. The same observation applies to individuals: it is the wealthy who buy the most slaves.

Athenian accounts from the fourth century BCE concur, indirectly, about the abundance of slaves. In the texts that evoke daily life in Athens, and especially the defense speeches that are delivered before the people's tribunal of Helios, the authors do not hesitate to speak of the slaves as a social reality that everyone is familiar with. "[T]hey are owned by everyone," says a litigant defended by the orator Lysias.⁷ And one must really be a disabled pensioner of the state and have limited resources to complain, as does another client of Lysias: "I am unable to procure someone to relieve me of the work"⁸—which does not mean that he has no domestic servant. In the case of the philosopher Aristotle, we know from his will that towards the end of his life he owned at least twenty slaves. He was, to be sure, a very well-to-do man, who benefited from the resources of his school at the Lyceum, who liked a luxurious table (he had many dishes), but who had only a small family, with two children. He employed his slaves solely for domestic purposes, unlike all those who, like the father of Demosthenes, owned several dozens for economic use in workshops, mines or fields. The number of slaves basically depends on the wealth of the owner.

Since we have addressed the question of the reliability of the figures, let us conclude on this matter by also raising the question of the high numbers that are available for Corinth (460,000) and Aegina

(470,000). The text that cites these figures evokes without ambiguity *douloi*; the reference is thus indeed to slaves. Such figures are not reconcilable with the capabilities of the cities. Undoubtedly, as Xenophon suggested, they were determined using financial registries, based on the slave markets of Corinth and Aegina in the days of their splendor. They probably correspond not to the slaves who were permanent residents of the cities, but rather to those who were the object of transactions, with all manners of corruption possible. One can imagine, for instance, that slaves who were bought, then resold and “re-exported,” were counted twice, since they were subject to double taxation, at the entrance to and exit from the city. Without being incorrect, these figures, unlike those that were obtained from the censuses, do not allow one to speak of a well-defined population.

The Number of Slaves in the Roman World

As in the case of the Greek cities, the data that the Roman state had at its disposal and used, beginning with census registers, have almost completely disappeared. Evidence gathered from papyri for part of Egypt gives a very limited idea of what existed elsewhere. Beyond Egypt, we have only three or four figures or general pieces of information. Be it with respect to slaves or to free men and women, the data for the very end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Empire—that is to say between the middle of the first century BCE and the death of Augustus (14 CE)—is the most reliable, especially for Italy. Specialists in antique demography therefore often begin with that period. For our part, after having advanced some probable figures for those sixty to sixty-five years, we will attempt to identify developments in the periods after the reign of Augustus, before returning to the past.

Information relating to free men (and especially to Roman citizens) is more solid than that which concerns slaves. Attempts to determine the number of slaves are, therefore, often related to the number of citizens. Unfortunately, even this latter number is not certain for the last decade of the Republic and the reign of Augustus. For the period between the beginning of the third century BCE and the reign of Augustus, a whole series of numbers of citizens derived from censuses have been transmitted by various Latin authors, notably Livy. In the second century, beginning in 169–168 BCE, the numbers stand, broadly speaking, between three and four hundred thousand adult male citizens: 312,805 in 169–168; 337,022 in 164–163; 324,000 in 154–153; 318,823 in 131–130; 394,336 in 114 BCE, etc.

During that period, not all free adult Italians were Roman citizens.

In 89–88 BCE, after the War of the Allies, also called the Social War (91–89), free Italians of the peninsula (as far as the Rubicon and the city of Lucca) received Roman citizenship. It is not surprising, then, that the census of 70–69 BCE registers a net increase in the number of citizens, which rises to 900,000 or 910,000. After this date, no census was completed before the beginning of the reign of Augustus, in 28 BCE. In his *Res gestae*, Augustus explains that he conducted three censuses (in 28 and in 8 BCE, then in 14 CE); they indicate 4,063,000 citizens for 28 BCE, 4,233,000 for 8 BCE, and 4,937,000 for 14 CE.

How can one explain that in forty two years, the total number of citizens grew from 910,000 to 4,063,000? To be sure, in 49 BCE Roman citizenship was granted to Northern Italy: Cisalpine Gaul. But even considering the growth in the number of citizens outside of Italy, and the foundation of colonies for veterans, does this adequately explain the quadrupling? According to the most common opinion, which dates back to J. Beloch and T. Mommsen, and which was defended by P. A. Brunt and C. Nicolet, the method of calculating changed at the time of Augustus: starting then, wives and children of citizens were included in the census, whereas previously only adult men were counted. On the other hand, like T. Frank before him, E. Lo Cascio has argued for some years that the number of adult male citizens really did grow from 910,000 to more than four million.

This divergence of interpretations has very important consequences for concepts of the total population of Italy. For the period of Augustus, P. A. Brunt envisaged a total population of 7,500,000 inhabitants (including slaves); E. Lo Cascio, for his part, arrives at a total of thirteen to sixteen million inhabitants (13.5 million in 28 BCE, 16.4 million in 14 CE): double Brunt's number! The very size of these figures leads him to believe that the number of slaves was not as significant as had previously been thought: for 28 BCE, he suggests a figure of 1,250,000 (the free population, including women and children, would thus rise to 12,250,000 inhabitants); for 14 CE, 1,930,000 slaves (and 14,470,000 free people).

With regard to the number of slaves, Roman evidence lends itself to half a dozen different approaches, which correspond to different types of sources and information and are not mutually exclusive. The first uses the very rare, direct information we have concerning the number. As we have seen, Galen writes that at Pergamum in the second century CE there was one slave for every two free inhabitants; that is to say, slaves made up 33 percent of the population (40,000 of a total of 120,000 people). Can this information be transposed onto the entire Empire? Certainly not. But some believe it can legitimately be transposed onto the city of Rome and to central and southern Italy.

Another approach uses indirect information stemming from measures taken by the Roman state. Thus, in 357 BCE, a 5 percent tax on manumission was introduced and its yield was allocated to a special fund called *aerarium sanctius*. For each freeing of a slave, 5 percent of his price was paid to the city and deposited into this special fund. It contained gold, which was reserved for extreme situations. The gold was used in 209, during the Second Punic War; revenues then stood at 4,000 pounds of gold. If, as seems to be the case, the *aerarium sanctius* had never before been emptied, and if a slave was worth, on average, 2,000 sesterces, such a sum is equivalent to 160,000 manumissions in 148 years, or approximately 1,080 manumissions annually. It remains to be seen what the number of freedmen was compared to the number of slaves. One can see how difficult it is to take advantage of such indirect information. Were it related to a tax on the purchases and sales of slaves, like the one that Xenophon used, the information would be easier to make use of. But this Roman tax of 5 percent concerned manumissions, and we do not know what percentage of slaves were freed.

Later on, in 42 BCE during the second triumvirate, the triumvirs in Italy made slave owners pay a tax of one hundred sesterces per slave. This tax would perhaps have brought in 200 million sesterces; if that was the case, it would have meant that there were 2 million slaves in Italy at the time. Such a figure, which corresponds entirely to Xenophon's method of calculation, is in itself very likely. But the information must be used cautiously, since the relevant passages lend themselves to several interpretations.

Another approach, adopted by J. Beloch among others, establishes the number of agricultural slaves by determining the population's consumption of wheat, the size of the areas to be cultivated, the number of farmers required, and the portion of those areas that were cultivated by slaves. The evaluation is risky and extremely approximate, but the number of colonies (which were occupied by small-and mid-size free owners) and the number of the veterans who had been sent there offer some indications. The population of the city of Rome, which, in those days, stood at somewhere between 800,000 and 1,200,000 inhabitants, and was probably around one million, also offers a point of reference.

In order to quantify the importance of slaves, Henri Wallon attempted in the mid-nineteenth century to take into account all categories of slaves: farmers, domestics, public slaves who had an administrative role, slaves working in the mines, in manufacturing and trade.⁹ But this method is even less satisfying than the others, because it is impossible to count the slaves belonging to some of these categories. For instance, how many slaves were involved in commerce

or manufacturing? We know nothing about this.

Two facts seem almost certain: at the end of the Republic (in Cicero's time) and under Augustus, slaves did not account for the majority of the population either of Italy or of Rome. Although it cannot be proven, all historians agree on this point; even those who insisted most on the influence of slavery did not claim that, at that time, slaves outnumbered free men.

A second fact: in that era, peninsular Italy is the region where the number of slaves is the greatest, because of its economic wealth, which is linked to its political influence. The density of the slave population in Italy is without a doubt greater than that of the eastern provinces. In the eastern Mediterranean, provinces such as Egypt did not have many slaves.

At the end of his encyclopedia, *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder engages in enthusiastic praise of Italy: "there is no country so beautiful, or which, for the productions of Nature, merits so high a rank as Italy, that ruler and second parent of the world; recommended as she is by her men, her women, her generals, her soldiers, her slaves, her superiority in the arts, and the illustrious examples of genius which she has produced."¹⁰ It is surprising that he counts slaves among Italy's assets, given that they never were Italian! But he is talking about slaves who live in Italy, whatever their origins.

Italy, along with Egypt, is the region of the Empire where calculating the number of slaves requires the least acrobatics. We must nonetheless accept the idea that, with the possible exception of Egypt, this number cannot be rigorously established by analyzing different factors and by calculations. The only method for evaluating the number of slaves in Italy during the Augustan period is to consider all available data, then to arrive at a comprehensive result that appears to take this data into account. A global figure must be provided rather than the sum of details. J. Beloch and P. A. Brunt proceeded in this manner, and we believe it is inevitable.

The proposed estimates are, moreover, not numerous; indeed, there are only two principal ones. After long, painstaking, and largely useless argumentation, some arrive at a result of somewhere between 30 and 40 percent.¹¹ For others, the number of slaves in Italy at the time of Augustus was considerably lower.¹² According to W. Scheidel and E. Lo Cascio, it did not exceed 10 to 15 percent of the total population. But although they both agree on the percentage of slaves, they differ on the absolute number, since Lo Cascio believes the population of Italy to be much larger than does Scheidel. Scheidel believes Italy has approximately 7 million inhabitants, and thinks that the number of slaves cannot be greater than 1 million. Lo Cascio

arrives at a higher absolute number of slaves, which he estimates to be between 1.5 and 2 million during the reign of Augustus.

As for J. Cels Saint-Hilaire, her position on the number of slaves results from another conclusion, to which she has devoted several articles. She explains that the word *libertinus*, which under the Principate applied to manumitted slaves, referred, in the third and second centuries BCE, to new citizens, whether they had previously been slaves or noncitizen free men and women.¹³ This opinion of Saint-Hilaire did not win everyone's approval, but it relies on interesting evidence and is, we believe, worth accepting. In order to confirm that the group of *libertini* included, at that time, men and women who had not been slaves, Saint-Hilaire attempts to show that the number of slaves was grossly inflated. This reasoning is, however, not indispensable, since the meaning of *libertinus* is not related to the number of slaves. Furthermore, as mentioned above, we do not know how many slaves were manumitted. If freed slaves were not very numerous at that time, the group of *libertini* might well have also comprised former wanderers—whatever the number of slaves.

For our part, we are inclined to agree with the first assessments, the highest ones. For one thing, Latin and Greek literatures offer a whole series of passages showing the extent to which the massive presence of slaves preoccupied contemporaries. Thus, Seneca mentions a debate during which senators are questioned about the necessity of requiring slaves to wear clothes that clearly distinguish them from free men (Seneca, *De clementia*, 1.24.1). He adds that the project was abandoned because the senators understood the dangers of giving slaves the possibility of counting free men and women! Tacitus, for his part, relates the beginnings of a slave revolt near Brindisi in 24 CE. The leaders, including an ancient Praetorian Guard named Titus Curtisius, were arrested and brought to Rome. The city, Tacitus specifies, had “already become uneasy because of the unchecked growth of the number of slaves, while the numbers of freeborn commoners decreased by the day.” In Varro's work on agriculture, which was written at the end of Cicero's time, there are constant references to agricultural slaves or shepherds, and almost none to a free permanent workforce. A century later, Pliny the Elder evokes the “legions of slaves,” “this multitude of strangers living in our houses” and whose names the masters do not even know (Pliny the Elder, 33.26). Such passages are numerous; one can of course argue that they are “rhetorical” or “ideological,” but it is difficult to ignore them.

The number of slaves owned by the elite provides other indications. Under Augustus's reign, according to the *Lex Fufia Caninia*, every owner saw testamentary manumission limited to a fifth of all his

slaves; furthermore, the law forbade the manumission of more than a hundred slaves in that manner. Such a measure appears to indicate that it was not exceptional to own more than five hundred slaves. Besides, we know from Tacitus that in 61 CE, the prefect of the city had under his roof, in Rome, some four hundred slaves (Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.43.4). And we are told that in 8 CE, one free man, Caius Caecilius Isidorus, owned 4,116 slaves (Pliny the Elder, 33.135). In the southern United States in the mid-nineteenth century slaves represented a third of the population, but only eleven people had five hundred slaves or more.

None of these indications constitutes proof, and none of them provides a figure. Nonetheless, the totality of available indications appears to rule out the idea that in Italy, in the first century BCE, and then under the rule of Augustus and of Tiberius, the number of slaves did not exceed 10 or 15 percent of the total population. We believe that the reason is clear: slaves, at that time, constituted about 30 to 40 percent of the total population.

And beyond Italy? In most of the provinces it is almost impossible to determine, even approximately, the size of the slave population. There were certainly fewer slaves in the provinces than in Italy. Among the western provinces, it is probably in Sicily and in Narbonnese Gaul that their numbers were the highest. C. R. Whittaker has pointed out that under Augustus and during the first two centuries of the Empire, traces of slaves in the provinces, particularly as agricultural workers, remain rare. The African records of the second century CE refer mainly to settlers, that is, to free peasants. Archaeological surveys, for instance near Cherchell in Algeria, have only revealed indigenous African establishments surrounding villas that most probably housed settlers and agricultural workers.¹⁴ In the first and second centuries CE, the extraordinary development of villas in Picardy and in the Ardennes left vestiges of hundreds of farms, but it is not possible to clearly discern slave cells. Thus, in the provinces, the number of known slaves remains limited, and the slaves that are referred to are generally not peasants. Of course, it would be wrong to draw the conclusion that worker and peasant slaves were absent from the provinces. But, at the beginning of the Empire, they were certainly less numerous than in Italy.

Within North Africa, the earliest conquered regions, such as proconsular Africa, probably had more slaves than the others (the two Mauritaniae). Available information is rare, but it appears that the number of slaves varied considerably from one place to another. The large properties of the elite had many slaves among the peasants: on the advice of her husband Apuleius, Pudentilla gave her sons, who

were important landowners, four hundred of her slaves at Oea in Tripolitania (Apuleius, *Apologia*, 93.3–4). According to R. Duncan Jones, more than 20 percent of the population of Siagu was made up of slaves. Conversely, in the other cities as well as on the large imperial domains of pro-consular Africa, the number of slaves confirmed by the inscriptions is minimal. In fact, at the beginning of the Empire, slaves probably did not exceed 15 percent of the entire population of North Africa. For Egypt, where evidence is more abundant, one can conclude that the proportion of slaves was even smaller, scarcely ever exceeding 10 percent—except perhaps in Alexandria—because of the large staffs of servants in the homes of the elite.

What is one to believe with respect to the fourth, third, and second centuries BCE? In peninsular Italy and in Sicily, the number of slaves must have increased substantially between the fourth and the first centuries BCE. As the Roman conquests succeeded each other, large masses of slaves were introduced into territories controlled by Rome, and the slave trade was added to victorious wars as a source of recruitment. But was this increase, which is certain, continuous and linear?

Not necessarily. It is not implausible that the arrival of slaves increased until the second century BCE, in the Italian peninsula as well as in Sicily, and that afterwards, after the Servile Wars of the end of the second century and the beginning of the first, the trend reversed itself, or at least slowed down. The three Servile Wars, those of Sicily (during the years 135–132 and 104–101 BCE), then that of Spartacus (73–71 BCE), involved the presence of large masses of rural slaves: the way in which these very serious insurrections got started and rapidly spread points in this direction. One recalls as well that when Tiberius Gracchus left for Spain in order to serve in the army there, he crossed coastal Etruria, and was dismayed at the sight of the deserted region, whose only workers and shepherds were slaves of the large *familiae*. It is not impossible that in peninsular Italy and in Sicily, in the latter half of the second century BCE, the number of slaves surpassed that of free men, and that it then dropped progressively to the figures that we advanced for the very last years of the Republic.

As in the United States in the nineteenth century, in Italy a slave population of between 30 and 40 percent was sufficient to affect the whole of society. To be sure, slaves were not the majority in the Empire, and most of the agricultural or craft work was not done by slaves. But the social and economic influence of slavery was nonetheless that of a “slave society.”

Where Do the Slaves Come From?

Antique slavery constitutes an extraordinary human sample group, coming from all the regions of the world known to the ancients. But the slaves themselves did not know everything about their roots. When they were torn away from their family environment in early youth, they underwent a powerful loss of identity that characterized and structured their personalities in some way. In *Anabasis*, Xenophon relates the edifying story of a soldier—a former slave in Athens—who, upon arriving at the Black Sea west of Trebizond, recognizes his mother tongue. He was not aware that he was ethnically a Macron and nobody had ever told him so, probably because nobody knew (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 4.8.4). It can happen, then, that the owners did not have accurate information and did not know more than the merchants chose to tell them.

The slave's origin is, indeed, all the more uncertain in that, according to the ancient authors, it constitutes a selling point. Some peoples are better known for producing good slaves than others, and rankings are customary in the antique mentality. According to Polybius, for instance, “those commodities which are the first necessities of existence, cattle and slaves, are confessedly supplied by the districts round the Pontus in greater profusion, and of better quality, than by any others.”¹⁵ Strabo writes that the Athenians gave their slaves the names of the countries they were assumed to have come from: “the Attic people were wont either to call their slaves by the same names as those of the nations from which they were brought (as ‘Lydus’ or ‘Syrus’), or addressed them by the names that were prevalent in their countries (as ‘Manes’ or else ‘Midas’ for the Phrygian, or ‘Tibius’ for the Paphlagonian).”¹⁶ It is probable that certain populations, whose reputation was less widespread among clients or more debated, were voluntarily underrepresented. This being said, variety prevailed and is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the knowledge that some of the ancients had of Mediterranean populations. Ancient authors base numerous ethnic remarks on their experience with slaves, who gave them a picture of the corresponding populations: thus Herodotus described resemblances between the Colchians and the Egyptians (Herodotus, 2.104).

For the Greek world, literary and epigraphic sources (which are primarily Athenian) reveal that in the fifth century, Phrygia and Thrace are the most common regions of slave origin, ahead of Caria and Lydia.¹⁷ As far back as the archaic period and the development of the slave trade, Phrygia was a preferred region of supply. Already in

the sixth century, Hipponax considered the Phrygians to be the core workforce: “Sell the barbarians that you have captured, and may the Phrygians go to Miletus to make barley flour!” In 414 BCE, at the time of the sale of goods seized from the Hermocopides, out of thirty-three slaves whose origin is mentioned, twelve were Thracians, seven Carians, and some Lydians—that is to say an area that was large, covering the coasts of Pontus and Asia Minor, but at the same time relatively concentrated (*IG I*³, 421). With regard to the fourth century, still in Athens, our information is more varied. In the mines of Laurium, origins are somewhat more diverse: Phrygians mixed with Paphlagonians, who were mining specialists.

In fact, diversifying the origins of slaves is recommended by the administrators, who seek in this manner to reduce the risks of rebellion (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Economics*, 1.344b 18.). Furthermore, a certain snobbery inspires owners to have exotic slaves, following the example of the vain personage in Theophrastus’s *Characters*, who has himself accompanied to the market by a black Ethiopian slave. But slaves usually come from the regions that are closest to the Greek world—from the Balkans to Asia Minor. The origins hardly vary, even if the proportions change. Slaves from the western Mediterranean, who stay in their regions, are very rare in the Aegean world. And the metics have the same origins: in combat, Xenophon writes, citizens find themselves mixed with “Lydians, Phrygians, Syrians and other barbarians” (Xenophon, *Ways and Means*).

Much later, under the high Roman Empire, the regions that supplied slaves remained the same: “one can buy here on the spot slaves from Pontus or Lydia or Phrygia—for indeed you can meet whole droves of them being conducted hither.”¹⁸ This stability offers a strong indication, signaling the existence and regularity of the slave trade as opposed to the hazards of conquest. The context of the times comes into play only with respect to political or military events, which can modify regional balances. In the second century BCE, following the settlement of Roman buyers in Delos and the crisis of the Seleucid Empire, the role of Cilician pirates grew. They brought many more slaves from the south of Asia Minor and the coast of Syria. In Egypt where, traditionally, slaves of foreign origin were rare—in Roman times, of 650 slaves registered in the census, scarcely 15 were imported—in addition to those who came from the usual regions of the Syria-Palestine coast, some were born in Africa, anywhere between Cyrene and Ethiopia. Not to forget, of course, the slaves of Greek origin; but their proportion is very difficult to determine, since, in their case, ethnic origins were not mentioned.

War, a “Slave Hunt”?

How did they become slaves? Although the local process of enslavement is very poorly known, there is scarcely any doubt that it is linked to a form of violence. The “day of slavery,” Homer’s phrase, still remains the crucial element.

The first cause that comes to mind is war. The laws of war remain constant throughout the periods of Antiquity: the victor has the right to dispose of his prisoners as he wishes, and thus to enslave them. Collective disasters of this kind mark the history and life of the Greek world. About one-third of the seizures of cities or battles recorded in our sources end with the capture of slaves—a capture that represents a lesser evil than death. Harshness or cruelty remains a basic fact of military policy, as is shown by the Macedonian kings when they prevail over cities: Philip, who “enslaved many cities”—from Potidaea in 356 to Olynthus and Orchomenus and Koroni, in 348—and Alexander, who did the same in Thebes in 335. Each time, the prisoners figured in the thousands or tens of thousands.

The contrast between the disaster that slavery is and the acceptance of that disaster is one of the most striking traits of the antique mentality. As Pseudo-Anodocides (4.23) points out at the beginning of the fourth century, these war practices were often recalled in tragic terms in the theater (Phrynichus, or Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*), but were accepted as a reality: “You, to whom these situations seem dreadful when you see them represented in the tragedies, you have them right in front of your eyes in the city, without being moved by them.” For, if fatalism there was, often a fatalism accompanied by a feeling of impotence, in everyday reality things were a bit more balanced.

Tradition has it that, according to time-honored practice, men were killed, whereas women and children were enslaved. In point of fact, things changed gradually. To be sure, sales continued. In 387, after his raid on the port of Piraeus, Teleutias sold his captives at the market of Aegina. But ransom is possible and, indeed, constitutes the main purpose of the transactions. In the fourth century it is obvious that prisoners are primarily for ransoming, to the point that the practice became a political issue. Demosthenes takes pleasure in underscoring his actions in favor of the city: “the equipment of the war-galleys and of choruses, of money contributions and of ransom of captives, and of other instances of liberality.”¹⁹ It was an act of euergetism, an additional tax benefiting the community that was expected from the wealthy. The idea of financial compensation took the form of compulsory conscriptions for work: after the battle of Granicus in 334, Alexander “took prisoners he bound in fetters and sent them away to

Macedonia to till the soil,” but probably on a temporary basis.²⁰ Philip, in turn, sent the Olynthians to work in the vineyards (Aeschines, *On the False Embassy*, 2.156), while the Carthaginians, after their victory over the Greeks of Agathocles at the end of a four-year war, “bound [the others] with fetters and forced them by their own labour to bring back again into cultivation the country they had laid waste during the war.”²¹

Without minimizing the individual disaster that such decisions represented, one must raise the question as to whether, in the end, captives really became slaves. Not always. When destroyed cities were reconstructed, some of the former inhabitants returned, and thus had not been sold into slavery. Such was the case of the Olynthians and the Thebans.²² Furthermore, the enslavement of Greeks was increasingly less tolerated. Bearing witness to this change is a military event that caused a scandal in fourth-century Greece: the capture of Olynthia by Philip of Macedon and the punishment imposed on its inhabitants. Demosthenes became impassioned and denounced the indecent behavior of certain Athenians who agreed to bring some Olynthians into their homes. This was the case of Aristides, who had with him some thirty women and children (Demosthenes, 19.305–6). It is likely that these serious incidents in Greek life did not affect the normal flow of the slave trade. If the conflicts between opposing Greek city-states had led to an increase in the number of slaves, why were there so few Greek slaves?

But war can, on the contrary, be conducted as a plundering and ransoming operation, particularly in non-Greek regions. Unlike what happened in Greece itself, the expeditions against non-Greeks often had enslavement as their goal. It is in this sense alone that the following words of Max Weber are valid for all periods of Antiquity: “War is slave hunting.”²³ Certain places appear to have been favored, chosen with that objective in mind: the area of the Chersonese Straits even constituted a regular destination for decades, at the expense of the Thracians and the Bithynians. Consider the campaign of Alcibiades in 407 (Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 36.3); the campaign of Clearchus, a Lacedaemonian exile, and his mercenary army at the end of the fifth century, “for the greatest benefit of the Greeks”; the expeditions of the Spartans; then of the Athenians again, up to the middle of the fourth century.

We should also draw attention to operations of banditry, raids, and piracy, which were very similar to war, and sometimes difficult to discern. The forms varied according to place and the proximity of markets. Near Athens, pirates demanded ransoms, with possible enslavement if the victim was unable to pay (Demosthenes, 53.6–9 and 57.18–19). Farther away they sold the prisoners. Sometimes the

latter settled down in the place of their capture: prisoners of Thera were slaves for three years before being manumitted and settling in Thera with their former abductors. On the periphery of the Greek world, captures and sales could be organized by the people themselves. In Thrace people referred to *halônetoi* slaves—bought with salt, according to local practice. Following Claude Meillassoux, in his writings on medieval and modern black Africa, one can distinguish banditry from raids: in the first case, operations are carried out within the community itself; in the second, they take place outside the community. It is difficult to be more specific in this area, but probably these practices are linked to the presence of markets.

The Birth of Slaves, Slaves by Birth

Are slaves predominantly men, women, or children? The answer varies according to the times and regions of the Mediterranean. If one considers that slavery was fundamentally tied to war, particularly at its origins—but afterwards as well—it is certain that, among slaves, the proportion of men remained limited, since men were killed. On the other hand, the number of youths, and therefore of male children, was considerable. They had to be supported and raised. The cost of their upbringing was more or less the same as that of slaves born in the home—although children had already escaped the (high) risks of mortality of the youngest age group. The role of the female slave was tied either to her reproductive function, or to her work. The reproductive role is important in ancient aristocratic societies, but even more so in cities: her children would be so many future slaves.

Everything depends as well on the sexual division of labor. Depending on the society, there are several models of male and female slavery. For Athens, the texts show a numerical predominance of males. Out of sixteen slaves, Cephisodoros owned four women and ten men (as well as two children). This proportion was maintained in the fourth century: in literary sources, men were twice as numerous as women. Aristotle owned thirteen slaves, of which eight were men. This overall impression is confirmed by our estimates of the population for the second half of the fourth century. It is necessary to establish a link between the figure of 150,000 adult male slaves, supplied by Hyperides, and the total of 200,000 to 250,000 slaves that we propose. This difference suggests a strong imbalance in favor of men, which the lists of manumitted also confirm. Such was not always the case, however: in the Hellenistic era, Delphi kept more women slaves.

In the Athenian texts of the fourth century (for instance, those of Xenophon and Pseudo-Aristotle), the reservations of slaveholders about the union of slaves and their possible reproduction are apparent. One has the impression that the master decided whether to permit offspring to live. It is therefore probable that few children were born of servile unions. If slaves were allowed a sex life, it must be separated from the demographic outcome, given living and working conditions as well as the considerable interference of the master, even in the sex lives of female slaves. Slave reproduction could only play an important role in the event of a weakening of the other sources of slavery, which, even during the Hellenistic period, is not the case in the Greek Mediterranean, with the possible exception of central Greece during the second and first centuries BCE. While the Greek world experienced the reduction or even, at times, the disappearance of debt slavery, the practice of supposedly voluntary abandonment continued in Asia Minor throughout Antiquity. "It is customary in Phrygia to sell even one's children, and to no longer care about them afterwards," writes Philostratus.²⁴ A generic name was attributed to the children who were thus sold: they are the *thrēptoi*. Used primarily in Phrygia, Psidia, and Lydia, this term, which also defined other statuses (and not always a slave status), bears witness to the extreme importance of the practice for the slave supply. On the other hand, the exposure of children was common in Greece itself, basically for economic reasons that are similar to those that exist elsewhere. But in Greece it was supposed to be discreet, whereas in the regions of Asia Minor it is a public event. Exposure was a very convenient practice, which allowed for the presence and development of a child population in the servile world without encouraging the reproduction of slaves.

In Greco-Roman Egypt, on the other hand, where exposure was traditionally rare, the birth of slaves in the master's home (*oikogēnēia*) was very widespread, and the exportation of these slaves was forbidden. It makes one think that the word *oikogēnēs* means "slave by birth," and not "slave born in the master's house," with the compulsory declaration of a birth certificate at the time of a sale. Thus a contract from 146 BCE concerns the sale of a "slave who is ten years old, Syrian, *oikogēnēs*." According to Iza Biezunska-Malowist, this is an indication that *oikogēnēia* was also common in Greece proper, a position more difficult to defend. The *oikogēnēia* can become a "naturalization" in the real sense, and at Idyma in the first century BCE, we also find the term *eggēneis*, synonymous with *oikogēneis*, to indicate "national" slaves as opposed to "foreigners."

Replacement of the Slave Population within the

Roman Empire

It seems that Italian slave owners of the Republican period also did not want to encourage the reproduction of their slaves, whereas those of the Principate appeared more favorable to it. In his second-century BCE treatise *De agricultura*, Cato the Elder almost never alludes to slave families, unlike Columella in the middle of the first century CE. In their excavations at Settefinestre, near the peninsula of Orbetello, Andrea Carandini and his disciples have identified the quarters where the slaves lived, and they believe it is possible to conclude that, in the Republican phase of the villa, these slaves had neither partners nor children, whereas subsequently, in the second century of our era, small living quarters were intended for the families of slaves.²⁵ In fact, the indications that texts and archaeology provide are too few to serve as a basis for general and well-founded conclusions. Despite this, the idea that the attitude of slave owners changed between the Republic and the Empire is very widespread. It is also based on the belief that a large number of slaves were war captives; thus, after the end of the major conquests, that is, after the reign of Augustus, the possibility of procuring slaves from outside the Empire decreased considerably, which in turn favored slave reproduction.

Over the past few years, several specialists in ancient demography have added new insights by showing that it was necessary to envisage several factors simultaneously. According to W. Scheidel, in spite of the dearth of available evidence, it is possible to establish several scenarios and then choose the most likely among them. But the development of these scenarios requires taking into account simultaneously the number of male and of female slaves, the evolution of these numbers, the size of the reserves from which the slave merchants could draw, and finally the frequency of manumission and the age at which it occurred.²⁶ For instance, the age at which female slaves were manumitted proves to be very important: if they were only freed late, their children would have been slaves, whereas in the opposite case, they were born free. Any conjecture regarding one of these variables has an influence on the others.

W. Scheidel calculates that replacing the slave population required the introduction of new slaves at an annual rate of about 5 percent—that is to say 5 percent of newborn slaves or of enslaved men and women, whatever their provenance, and whether they were born free or slaves. He sets the percentage at 5 percent (obviously a crude approximation) based on life expectancy and on the infant mortality rate of *vernae* slaves (that is, slaves by birth). Furthermore, he points out that, at that time, the slave population of the Empire had to reproduce itself at least at its existing level. For if one admits a

reduction of that population, be it of only 1 percent annually, a century later there would have been almost no more slaves. As we are looking at several centuries, we have to assume that the slave population reproduced itself, that it did not diminish at all, or only insignificantly.

If one concludes that in Italy, between the middle of the first century BCE and the Julio-Claudian dynasty, slaves comprised between 30 and 40 percent of the population, that is to say approximately 2.5 million slaves in a total population of 7.5 million, then those 5 percent are the equivalent of 125,000 new slaves. And if one assumes, as we have done, that for the same period a sixth of the population of the whole Empire—that is to say 10 million out of 60 million inhabitants—were slaves, this means that each year the Empire acquired 500,000 new slaves! W. Scheidel writes that such figures are enormous, even for Italy alone. Indeed, in the United States of the eighteenth century, between 1740 and 1810, at a time when the Atlantic slave trade had peaked, the New World received on average 60,000 new slaves annually. And for the entire period during which slaves were exported to the Americas, an annual average of only 28,000 were counted.

This is why W. Scheidel does not believe in such a large slave population, either for Italy or for the rest of the Empire. We do not share his skepticism, for his argumentation has its limits. The comparison with the United States is misleading for, in modern times, slaves were not supplied by big wars and, furthermore, the ocean crossing caused enormous losses, while limiting the number of transports that were possible. Furthermore, no free person was reduced to slavery in America itself whereas part of the slave population of the Roman Empire had been enslaved within its borders.

This being said, the objections of W. Scheidel are strong, and it is impossible not to take them into account. His main objection concerns the relationship between the proposed number of slaves and the number of female slaves. If one adopts the position that there were both many slaves in the Empire and few female slaves, the two assertions taken together present an impossible situation. It is then not conceivable, he writes, that four or five hundred thousand new slaves could be found each year: the reserves outside the Empire from which the merchants drew were not populated to the extent that such a heavy loss was conceivable on a regular basis and over the long term. Maintaining our figures implies that the Empire had almost as many female slaves as male slaves, and that at the time, female slaves were manumitted very late, between thirty and forty years old at the earliest, which is to say shortly before becoming infertile.

If this is the case, in Caesar's time and during the first century of

the Empire, we would conclude that within the Empire, some 200,000 to 250,000 slave children were supplied annually through natural reproduction—a reproduction that the masters accepted, indeed encouraged and organized. Such figures are not improbable: in the United States, between the beginning of the importation of slaves and 1865, the black population multiplied sixfold compared to the number of black people who had come from Africa. Imported blacks rose to a total of 600,000 or 650,000, and the black population was six times larger in 1865.

From where did the other new slaves come, under the Empire? Slaves born outside the Empire could only be supplied through war or trade; either they were prisoners of war or they had been enslaved outside of the Empire before being sold to merchants who resold them in the Empire. To be sure, there still were the spoils of war within the Empire. For instance, Strabo (*Geography* 4.6.7) and Cassius Dio (*Roman History* 73.25.4) inform us that the expedition against the Salassi in 25 BCE supplied 44,000 slaves. Under the reign of Tiberius, Germani, Numidians, and Thracians were enslaved. During the Jewish War (66–70 BCE), the same fate befell 130,000 captives, according to Flavius Josephus.²⁷ Small, routine operations on the borders could also provide slaves; and it is not out of the question that certain imperial conquests, which were not very profitable from a fiscal perspective—for instance that of Brittany—were undertaken precisely with the goal of acquiring slaves.²⁸ This being said, after the death of Augustus, military campaigns lost much of their importance, and it is hard to imagine that the provision of slaves by means of war played the same role as in the past. As to the slaves that came from outside of the Empire through the slave trade, it is impossible to determine their numbers.

One can only assume that between one-quarter and one-half of the new slaves were enslaved within the Empire. Besides the uprisings and military operations inside the Empire, there were seven means by which a free inhabitant of the Empire could be enslaved: the sale of children by their parents, the exposure of newborns; banditry; piracy; voluntary sale by the person himself; certain convictions under the Empire; finally, indebtedness.

These last two means did not affect many people. In fact, debt-bondage usually did not lead to slavery proper, but to other forms of dependency. And criminal convictions that imposed slavery (the case of the *servi poenae*) were infrequent since they were not in the Roman tradition. On the other hand, we know of certain cases of voluntary slavery. He who sold himself in this manner was destitute, and had no other means of survival. Or, in other cases, he sold himself in order to fulfill administrative functions reserved for slaves; here the man was

not very poor, but rather someone who sought a social promotion. This is the circumstance of a freedman in *Satyricon*, who declares: “I gave myself over as a slave” (Petronius, *Satyricon*, 57.4). Voluntary slavery was definitive (except in the case of manumission), provided that the man (or woman) was at least twenty years old and had received the price of his (or her) enslavement. Was this practice common? Paul Veyne, who has drawn attention to it, attaches much less importance to it—and rightly so, we believe—than to the exposure of newborns.²⁹

There remain four other means by which the men and women, boys and girls of the Empire could be enslaved: the sale of children by their parents,³⁰ their exposure, banditry, and piracy. All four are confirmed in ancient texts. Piracy, which was particularly fearsome in the seventies and sixties BCE, before Pompey overcame the pirates in 67 BCE, was not completely eradicated under the Empire. As for banditry, Suetonius alludes to it twice, with respect to Italy, in the *Lives* of Augustus and Tiberius (Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum: Augustus*, 32.1–3, and *Tiberius*, 8.2): he writes that the deplorable practices that had spread in the course of the civil wars were difficult to eradicate after the victory of Augustus. Knowing that travelers were kidnapped on their journeys and forced to work in the worst conditions, Augustus charged Tiberius with having all the *ergastulas* of Italy inspected—those places where the slave owners imprisoned their shackled slaves.

It is nonetheless the exposure of children that must have played the predominant role from a quantitative point of view. “Abandoned children are certainly the principal source of slavery under the Empire,” writes Paul Veyne.³¹ In fact, the exposure of newborns seemed so normal and customary to the Latins that they were surprised that certain foreigners—Jews and Germans according to Tacitus (*Histories* 5.5 and *Germania* 19), Egyptians in the words of Strabo (17.824)—did not practice it.

In short, we believe that within the Empire, the exposure of newborn children represented, at that time, the primary source of slavery, after natural reproduction. The practice of exposure helps explain the presence of numerous girls and women among the slaves, since it seems that more female babies were exposed. Among the principal sources of slavery, there were also wars and military operations, both within and outside the Empire, as well as the slaves who entered the Empire when they were already in the hands of merchants and traffickers.

Studying the reproduction of slaves and the sources of slavery can seem easier for the Republican era, between the fourth and first centuries, because external wars play a greater role during that period.

It is tempting to believe that, for those centuries, the supply of slaves is entirely assured by war. But that impression is partially misleading. The Republican era is a time of change, unlike the more stable early Imperial era. We know very little about this change: is it linear—in other words, does the number of slaves increase fairly regularly from the fourth to the first century? or are there ups and downs? were there more slaves in Italy and Sicily toward the middle of the second century BCE than in Cicero's time? In view of the available evidence, these questions, which we have raised earlier, make the issue of reproduction almost intractable. We can only say that natural reproduction was less important under the Republic, but that one should nonetheless assume the presence of more female slaves than is often estimated.³² Furthermore, at that time piracy and banditry must have played a greater role than later on, under the Empire. Even under the Republic, the importance of the spoils of war should not obscure the other sources of slavery. Finally, let us bear in mind that all of these sources are then replaced by trade. Trade was not, strictly speaking, a source of slavery, even if it offered the masters the possibility of buying slaves; it was an activity that allowed the exchange of the latter.

Slave Markets

Whatever the origins of the slaves, slavery leads to sales and the market. But the commercial networks and the material conditions of these sales are very poorly known. Is the market a place of “traumatism”? And what about prices and contracts? There obviously were sale contracts, but none from Greece were passed down to us, even if they are referred to with regard to Athens in Hyperides' plea *Against Athenogenes*. On the other hand, contracts and documents relating to the sale of slaves are preserved for the Near East, Egypt, and even Roman Italy, where slaves who were left as security on loans were sold at auction if the debt was not reimbursed to the lender. The variety of conditions of enslavement led to a very heterogeneous structure for the slave trade. To begin with, the places of sale were multiform. The armies themselves sold slaves, and they were systematically accompanied by specialized merchants who sold the booty (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 7.7.53, and *Hellenica*, 4.6.6; Plutarch, *Agessilaus*, 1.22). But the enslavement of captives was not always authorized; Tissaphernes forbade it in Greece (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 2.4.27). Some places were particularly appealing: in 304, Rhodes, because it had not been plundered, drew merchants, and more than a thousand ships landed there (Diodorus of Sicily, 20.82.5). As to the

pirates, they were based at Side, in Pamphylia (Strabo, 14.3.2).

Certain cities had permanent or periodic markets, where slaves who had been captured close by were sold. At Anactorio, the Corinthians sold 800 prisoners (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.55). Apollo's sanctuary at Actium in the territory of Anactorium is the site of a *panegyrie*, a religious feast accompanied by a fair, and slaves were sold there.³³ There were also markets where slaves gathered who had been convoyed far from the regions of capture or trade: Mylasa, Theangela in Caria, and Byzantium (Polybius, 4.38), as well as the cities located on the margins of Sicily. In the West, Strabo marks Aquileia, for instance (5.1.8). Finally, there are the end markets in the places of consumption, such as Athens, Corinth, Aegina, Chios, Ephesus, and the Roman West, mainly Rome, Carthage, and the other ports. Purchases of slaves are also found in small markets like Anthedon in Boeotia. Other centers are able to deal with large numbers: in Athens, when Xenophon plans to buy slaves in the name of the city, his final goal is to acquire three per citizen, that is to say, 90,000 slaves! His intention is to buy them progressively, beginning with a batch of 1,200 slaves. This tactic is prompted not by the difficulty of procuring very large numbers at once, but by the awareness that such numbers will cause increases in prices, to the detriment of quality (Xenophon, *Revenues*, 4.36).

It is nonetheless the island of Delos that holds the record. Strabo mentions a *myriad* of slaves, that is to say, ten thousand slaves sold there every day, and with remarkable speed: "Merchant, arrive, disembark, and everything is sold!" He thus implies a system under which the cargo was ordered in advance and under which the slaves possibly did not leave the ship, waiting for another merchant (*emporos*) to take the charge to Rome (Strabo, 14.5.2). The evolution of this slave trade varies according to the size of the clientele and according to the political and military balance of power. Starting with the free port of 166 BCE, but especially in the last third of the second century BCE, with the fall of Seleucid power in the East, the slave market of Delos became the preferred place of purchase for the Romans. A new system was put into place in Cilicia and Pamphylia, in order to carry out the piracy operations that Strabo evokes and to transport slaves directly to Delos. The text of this geographer is thus about the era when Delos was experiencing the most successful period of slave trade in the entire history of the Mediterranean. The Romans remained in Delos until about the 80s–70s BCE, and then left the island. It was also the time when they destroyed Cilician piracy (the expedition of Pompey in 67). The same period witnessed the setting up of Roman businessmen in the interior of Asia Minor. This was the case in Phrygia for instance, at Akmonia, where a certain Gaius

Sornatius had a *statarion* (a slave market) constructed in the city with his own funds.³⁴ Both buyers and markets thus moved eastward in order to be closer to the sources of procurement.

The slave markets, which are important places of purchase, comply with rules, both in Greece and in the Roman world. Since the classical era in Athens, there was a law of sale concerning guarantees made to buyers against hidden defects, which applied to the sale of animals and slaves.³⁵ There was a procedure for return (*anagoge*) if diseases arose that were concealed by the seller of the slave (Plato, *Laws*, 11.916). The duration of the right varied according to the seller's and buyer's level of professionalism (the professional was considered responsible because of his competence). One of the first known laws of commerce comes from Abdera (*BCH* 1942–43), an important town on the coast of Th race that, in the middle of the fourth century, issued a regulation concerning the duration of *anagoge* (for slaves and animals) depending on diseases (one year for epilepsy, for instance, and four days for a fever). It is interesting to observe that, in a large place of regular fairs such as Baitokaike in Syria, a municipal law sought to attract and create a “free fair” by suppressing all the expenses that would weigh on the sellers, such as taxes and complaints relating to hidden defects. This indicates the extent to which hiding defects was common practice. As to the slaves, the only information we have concerns their physical qualities, which is obviously what mattered the most to buyers and which was the object of careful scrutiny at the time of a transaction. With regard to classical Greece, we do not know whether there are provisions for a broader range of deceptions about professional skills; we do know for instance that since the slave's origin was often an important factor with respect to price, certain origins were falsely enhanced and attributed.

In several periods of Antiquity, slaves thus constituted an important part of the population, but never in all of the regions affected. In certain cities of classical Greece, slavery reached 50 percent of the population, maybe even more. In Rome and Italy, it is not impossible that it attained the same percentage in the second century BCE. We believe that subsequently, starting in the era of Caesar, slaves represented between 30 and 40 percent of the population of Italy. If one considers the entire Mediterranean, they were very clearly a minority. But their numbers were sufficient to shape diverse aspects of these antique societies. One of the reasons for the impact of slavery is the range of activities in which slaves were engaged. Chapter 4 is devoted to these activities.

4 THE SLAVE AND ECONOMIC LIFE

The slave is, by definition, a subject being and his work represents the most powerful symbol of that submission. This is all the more so since, in Antiquity, work was viewed as a service, a social relationship, rather than an autonomous and individual activity, as in modern times. The slave's relation to economic life existed within this framework of constraints and necessities. Moreover, slavery played a role in the depreciation of certain aspects of work. "Zeus, the Old Thunderer, robs a man of half his virtue the day the yoke clamps down around his neck."¹ This traditional presentation of the slave explains why he often appears to be lacking motivation; responding to an interlocutor who refers to men with capabilities but no interest in what they do, Socrates observes: "I see ... , you wish to direct the discussion to the topic of slaves?"²

It is not easy to form an accurate representation of the role of slaves in economic life, since ancient texts rarely mention that role—except those that refer to the management of the household or of property, such as the *Economics* in the classical Greek era, and the texts of the agronomists in Roman times. Even seemingly quite precise texts about fortunes offer scant information: in his famous speech about his own patrimony, Demosthenes refers to workshops and to the number of slaves working in them, but almost nothing is said about other slaves.

And yet, slaves were present in all sectors of economic life; that is the main thing. There are few activities from which they were completely shut out, contrary to what one observes in the slave societies of the New World during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Greco-Roman Antiquity constitutes the only historical example of a society where slaves were both numerous and more or less ubiquitous, present at all levels of active life. The male slave was a farmer, a miner, a blacksmith, a prostitute, a merchant, a banker, a doctor, a gladiator, and even, if he was employed by the city, an administrator, a policeman, or a tax inspector.

In Greece as in Rome, most of these jobs were also held by free men, manumitted slaves or *ingenui* (that is, those who were born to free parents). Certain doctors, born free and very rich, were true notables. But others worked as slaves, either in the household of their master, or alongside him, for the public. At Delphi, a slave doctor named Damon was freed in 155/154 BCE, and after his manumission he had to continue working in the medical practice of his former master, Dionysius.³

The same was true for gladiators. In the third century BCE, when people began frequenting their fights in Rome, they were prisoners of war. That is the way one distinguished, among the gladiators, Samnites from Thracians or Gauls. But subsequently, slaves, convicts, and free men also confronted each other in the arena, and the number of free gladiators was by no means insignificant.

As to female slaves, their activities were not as varied as those of men. Like free women, they were all but absent from many commercial trades, from manufacturing and from the financial world. It is thus very surprising to discover in the city of Rome, at the end of the first century CE or at the beginning of the second, a female wholesale merchant of grains and dried vegetables: Abudia Megiste, a manumitted slave (*CIL* 6.9683). In Narbo, we count 53 names of urban trades (it is the highest number of trades known for a Roman city, with the exception of Rome itself, where there are 160); in all, only two women are mentioned (one who folds clothes, the other a hairdresser); moreover they are freewomen, not slaves.⁴ But in the mines, female slaves were assigned to the preparation of iron ore for smelting.⁵ And there were also many women in textiles, which is among the trades described in Athenian catalogs of manumissions dating from the 320s.⁶ Female slaves were thus not all farmers, domestics, or prostitutes.

In this chapter devoted to slaves working in the production and exchange of goods,⁷ we use the modern classification of the main economic sectors: “primary,” “secondary,” and “tertiary” sectors. One must nonetheless bear in mind the specificities of the slave’s work, for instance its versatility and lack of specialization. Nor must one forget that the ancients did not reason in terms of three sectors. In Athens, Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 1.5) considers that there are two main categories of slaves: the household servant (*diakonos*) and the errand-boy, he who goes to the market (*agorastēs*); thus there is, on the one hand, household service, which includes numerous and diverse economic tasks (particularly in agriculture); on the other hand, market sales. In the first case, the names of servile activities lack specificity—one speaks of servants, or even “boys” (*païs/ paidēs*); in the latter case, specialization can go very far—some slaves are referred to in the texts as “sellers of incense,” or “sellers of sesame,” or “sellers of hemp.”

The Romans establish a division between two categories of slaves: on the one hand urban slaves, the *familia urbana*; on the other farm slaves, the *familia rustica*. For, generally speaking, the Latin word *familia* did not refer to the family as we understand it, but to all of the dependents of the *paterfamilias*, including all of his slaves.

Slavery and Agriculture

The earliest slaves known in the Greek world lived in a society that was still not very urbanized. In Homer, they were swineherds like Eumeus or goatherds like Melanthios. Subsequently the cities developed, but agriculture did not become secondary as a result; on the contrary, it continued to represent, by a long shot, the most widespread economic activity. It is therefore logical to believe that slaves were very much present in that sphere. The *Economics* always describes the slave on an agricultural estate; and agriculture is considered the privileged economic means for allowing the family patrimony to prosper. Thus all historians agree on the existence of male slaves in the countryside, in classical and Hellenistic Greece as well as in most regions of the Roman world. But there is debate as to their numbers and the extent of their role in agriculture.

The presence of significant numbers of slaves on the domains of large Greek landowners—each of whom can possess several dozen—is not disputed. Historians who disagree with the importance of slavery in agriculture consider that these slaves, of whom there can indeed be many, do not all necessarily have an agricultural role, and that their numbers are not proof of their economic necessity. Now, barring such necessity, poor people did not own slaves, or owned very few. Therefore, the accounts in the *Economics* only concern rich people, and those who are portrayed in Attic comedy are considered to be removed from reality, since they play on an ideal social representation, which would emphasize the desire to own slaves that is common to all men and, above all, to free men.

Is this reasoning justified? Two obvious facts are worth repeating: the wealthy always had more slaves than the poor; and agriculture is the activity that occupied the largest number of people, free as well as slaves. However, taking all social statuses into account, agricultural trades were less often referred to in our sources than craft trades. Most free men worked in agriculture. But that did not exclude, a priori, the fact that slaves did as well. Furthermore, the slaves used in agriculture were generally not “specialists,” whereas the activities tied to the market and to sales favored highly specialized slaves. This is one of the factors that explain the underrepresentation of agricultural activities among the names of trades that are transmitted to us: of the 160 names of trades known from Greek sources of the classical era, only 12 are related to agriculture.⁸ Similarly, on the list of slaves sold with the goods of the Hermocopidai, one finds the names of 40 slaves (of whom 3 are *oikogēneis* and 27 of non-Greek origin); only 6 professions appear: the *oikogēneis* include a donkey-driver and an overseer of personnel; among the others, one finds a goldsmith from

Caria, a bronzesmith and two leather craftsmen (*IG I³*, 421). Agriculture is not a trade, socially speaking, especially in the eyes of the wealthy.

The number of slaves assigned to agricultural work depends also on one's notion of the average size of properties. It has long been believed that in Athens—the city that is always at the heart of our knowledge of Greek slavery—smallholdings traditionally prevailed in the classical period: the free man (and his family) worked his land alone or almost alone—in other words, without the help of slaves. This “egalitarian” model, probably more ideological than real, has lost favor nowadays among certain historians, who revise upwards the distribution of property ownerships: according to L. Foxhall, 9 percent of citizens owned 50 percent of the land, and R. Osborne believes that 7.5 percent had 30 percent.⁹ Land leases or purchases of public lands reveal that the share of the wealthy was considerable.¹⁰ Agriculture is the economic sector that best permits profiting from price variations:¹¹ simultaneously the most speculative and the most reliable, it can moreover be combined with—and this is sometimes new to the elite—other economic sectors that are, from the outset, more closely tied to trade.

The Greek world as a whole does not give the impression of being entirely made up of smallholdings. Archeological survey reveals average property sizes ranging from 13 hectares at Halieis in Argolis and 16 hectares in Metapontum to 22 hectares at Laurium. At Chersonesos two models coexist, one of 4.5 hectares and the other of 28 hectares.¹² The farm of Timesios in Attica, right in the middle of Laurium, in the valley of Agrileza, about three kilometers from Cape Sounion, constitutes an example that is virtually emblematic of a fourth-century agricultural estate: this property of 22 hectares was adapted to the demands of the local market since it fed the miners of nearby Laurium; in order to do so, it maintained both mining activities near the agricultural land and agricultural infrastructure (two threshing floors for cereals).¹³

From the Smallholding to the “Slave” Villa

In the Roman world, slaves participated in an important way in agriculture and husbandry—which does not mean that the agrarian labor force was primarily made up of slaves. Even in Italy, where, moreover, the situation varied according to the times, it is not at all certain that most of the agricultural work was done by slaves.

The historian Appian of Alexandria, who lived in the second

century CE, explains that, as they advanced in their conquests, the Romans appropriated part of the land of conquered peoples in order to found “colonies” there.¹⁴ Each of these new cities comprised a small urban center and a rural territory. The citizens of these cities, Romans or “Latins,” were recruited among the poor free men, and, especially from the beginning of the first century BCE, among veterans (former soldiers). These settlers of the Roman colonies were allocated land—first in the form of very small plots of one, two, or three hectares. In 184 BCE for instance, the citizens of Pesaro and of Potenza each received six jugera (1.5 hectares); in 183, the Roman settlers of Modena received five (1.25 hectares). Later on, at the end of the Republic, their plots became larger. A family was certainly capable of cultivating three hectares (even if, in addition to this plot, there were city-owned grazing lands for collective use). But additional manpower became necessary when one reached a dozen hectares.

Moreover, the public treasury of Rome kept part of these confiscated lands for the conquered peoples, leasing them to free men, individually, even for a seemingly modest fee. Called “public lands” (*ager publicus*), these leased lands could be cultivated or used for grazing. The members of the elite worked a significant part of them. Thus the size of the elite’s properties increased considerably in the third and second centuries BCE, while the number of slaves in agriculture and husbandry multiplied. The Roman conquests enriched the city and all Romans, but not equally: the elite drew much larger profits than the rest of the citizens. Appian shows this evolution clearly: “Thus the powerful ones became enormously rich and the race of slaves multiplied throughout the country, while the Italian people dwindled in numbers and strength.”¹⁵

From then on the owner did not work the land himself, as the senator Quinctius Cincinnatus had apparently done in the fifth century BCE. The conquests, which had made it possible to enslave masses of enemies, were at the origin of the development of trade, and in particular of the slave trade. As a result, the lands of the elite, senators and knights, which, until the first century BCE, were primarily located in Latium and Campania, were, for the most part, cultivated by slaves.

A certain type of estate, which we call the *villa* (a Latin word for rural property), spread in central Italy. For the periods covered, we have three treatises in prose about the management of properties: the *De agricultura* of Cato the Elder (which dates back to the middle of the second century BCE), the *De re rustica* of Varro (written in the third quarter of the first century BCE) and the *De re rustica* of Columella (middle of the first century CE). All three deal with the villa and advise their readers, primarily property owners, on the subject.

Several crops were cultivated, for the peasants (free men as well as slaves) lived in part off the villa's production. However, when the villa incorporated hillsides, it was often dedicated to arboriculture, vines and olive trees, for wine and oil were widely traded.

The villa was not necessarily very extensive—sometimes ten or twenty hectares, sometimes more, but never huge in size. Cato, in his treatise, speaks of a villa in the region of Casinum and Venafrum which includes 25 hectares of vineyards and 60 hectares of olive groves. A vineyard cultivated by slaves was not supposed to be immense; otherwise it was very poorly run. The recourse to slaves did indeed involve close surveillance, and the costs of controlling the labor force grew with the size of the lands, in a progressive rather than a proportional manner. Furthermore, even a small landholder, a sharecropper or a farmer, could own one or several slaves who worked the land with him.

Farm Slaves at Work

What do we know about the work of the slaves? Their role consisted in “transporting, taking care of, looking after the goods of the master”—in other words, in “planting, tilling the fallowed land, seeding or bringing in crops” (Xenophon, *Economics*, 9.16 and 11.16). Since agriculture was not viewed as a trade, agricultural work did not prevent farm slaves from also participating in household activities. Besides, agriculture did not keep the workers occupied full time year-round; in addition to production, there were services, sales, transportation. The Greeks managed their properties according to a canonical division: on the one hand, the “workers”; on the other, the overseer-manager (*ēpitropos*). The first example of the latter is Evangelos, Pericles' overseer, who imposed new accounting discipline and provoked discontent among the women of the house. Another overseer, Antidoros, was in charge of the farm of Timesios in Attica. The overseer-manager has a double function: he organizes the work of the other slaves and he plays the role of intermediary with respect to the master. The example of Evangelus, Pericles' overseer, underscores the new characteristics of this *oikonomia*: accounting, storing reserves, calculating expenses, estimating and organizing budgets (Plutarch, *Pericles*, 16.3–5). It is characteristic that Antisthenes, who wrote the first *Economics*, should also have written a work about the overseer and the qualities that are expected of him. The *ēpitropos* has to know how to command (*archein*), but also to distribute rewards, etc. (Xenophon, *Economics*, 13.12).¹⁶ Nonetheless, sometimes, in the case of landowners who are perhaps more modest, the slave is alone. This

is the case of Callaros, in Demosthenes' *Against Callicles*, who builds a fence with or without the agreement of his master; the slave can be prosecuted in the name of his master. The equipment is managed by the master, and it is probably his property.

The treatises are very intent on specifying tasks and organizing labor, because the goal of the *oikonomia* is obviously to improve labor productivity, to put the slaves to work (Xenophon, *Economics*, 3.4). From this perspective, teamwork is very important: "Since one man will fairly distance ten simply by working at the time, and another may as easily fall short by taking leave before the hour" (20.16). Strict surveillance is also indispensable: "to let the fellows take things easily the whole day through will make a difference easily of half in the whole work" (20.17). Oversight is all the more important since farms and rural establishments, built in open country, are increasingly frequent from the fourth century BCE on, and serve, among other things, as a shelter for the servile workforce.

Similarly, on the Roman villa, when the land was cultivated by slaves, the entire permanent workforce was servile; at its head was the overseer or steward (*vilicus*), himself a slave. Of the twelve books that comprise his treatise, Columella dedicated one to the steward and another to the latter's wife, the *vilica*. The steward was an important individual, who belonged to the slave elite. He filled the master's role and saw to it that the master's orders were carried out. He had to direct and oversee work, buy or borrow the necessary equipment as well as the slaves' clothes and whatever food that was not produced on the property. He assured the maintenance of order. The master, in turn, had to keep a close eye on the steward (Cato, *De Agricultura*, 5).¹⁷ Columella compares the steward to an officer who commands troops in battle (Columella, *De re rustica*, 11.1.17). In fact, several historians have noted that the agricultural "villa" had things in common with barracks.

The Latin agronomists wondered about the size of the labor force that the landowners needed. The Greek texts of the classical period scarcely raise the question of numbers or do not raise it as openly: "There should not be too many from the same nation," is all that Pseudo-Aristotle advises (*Economics*, 1.5.6). Cato, on the other hand, envisages thirteen slaves for the olive grove, including the steward and his wife, and sixteen for the vineyards, the exploitation of which is also managed by a steward. Cato himself had, for the olive grove, five slaves without particular qualifications (*operarii* in Latin), and ten for the vineyards. Most of the other slaves took care of the livestock. To be sure, in the Roman tradition, pasturages were separate from agricultural lands; but draft animals were also present on the

agricultural land, to assure plowing and transportation, to operate the millstone, and for their meat. Thus there were cattlemen, swineherds, donkey-drivers, and a shepherd.

This is a system of direct exploitation, “under stewardship.” In other words, the property is managed for the direct benefit of the owner and under his orders, even if he acts through the intervention of a steward. What was original about the system is that the slaves labored collectively, under the orders of the steward. If they were numerous, they were organized into teams (which were sometimes referred to as *decuria*), under the orders of other slaves, the foremen (*monitores*). One can therefore speak of “team slavery,” or “plantation slavery.”¹⁸

Cato recommends keeping the slaves occupied at all times, even on holidays, and making them work in the buildings when the weather prevents outdoor work. He advises selling old slaves, who have become useless, as well as those who are in poor health (Cato the Elder, *De agricultura*, 2.7). He gives each of them a tunic once a year and a pair of shoes every two years; they never own more than one tunic at a time. Their food consists mainly of grains and olives (56–59). Rations have to be reduced if they are sick, because then they can no longer work. They are most probably housed in barracks similar to those found at Settefinestre.¹⁹

Xenophon keeps tight control over the sex lives of his slaves; only the most deserving receive his authorization. Cato organizes, in town, the prostitution of his female servants to his male slaves, and he profits from the arrangement (the money spent by the men comes back to him). But his treatise mentions only one woman in the villa, the *vilica*, wife of the steward (Plutarch, *Cato the Elder*, 21.3).²⁰ A century later, Varro advises giving partners (also slaves) to the best slaves and to the shepherds, so that they can have children. For, he says, if the shepherds have women and children, they become more attached to their herds, and their children enlarge the *familia* of the slaves, something he views as positive (Varro, *De re rustica*, 1.2.17–19; 2.1.26 and 2.10). At Varro’s estate, the steward is, furthermore, not the only one to receive a wage; he advises giving one to the foremen as well, and maybe even to other slaves. What was the situation on most of the estates? The absence of women seems highly unlikely, as we have said in chapter 3.

Some of the slaves were chained up; they constituted the notorious “ergastula,” which is not found on all the properties. The word “ergastula” designates both the chained-up slaves and the place where they were kept.²¹ That place was an underground dungeon. The windows were narrow and high enough that the slaves could not reach them. There were several slaves to a cell (as seems to be the

case with the other agricultural slaves); they probably slept directly on the ground or on straw. Dangerous but very strong, the slaves of the *ergastula* were powerful workers; their rations of bread and wine were more abundant than those of the other slaves.

Even if Cato writes that the slaves must never be hungry or cold, and that the herdsman must be won over so that the cattle are well treated, he was certainly very hard on his peasant slaves. Varro and especially Pliny the Younger are less harsh; they are more adept at handling the situation. The degree of severity was due as much to the times as to the man. Between Cato's era and that of Pliny the Younger, there was probably an evolution in the condition of peasant slaves. Although Jean-Christian Dumont wonders if this evolution was not accompanied by a counter-trend due to the concentration of slaves on a few very large estates. All things considered, reading Cato and Varro gives a good idea of how miserable the life of a peasant slave on a villa of central Italy could be.

Among the thirty slaves that Cato speaks of, only the two stewards and their wives could reasonably hope to be manumitted some day. Very few peasant slaves were freed, especially in the Republican era. Jean Christian Dumont believes that at least two-thirds of the slaves were agricultural laborers then. The vast majority of slaves of that era therefore had no hope of being manumitted, and a good number of them must have been aware of this.²² The slaves' condition varies enormously from one category to another. Along with slave miners, slave farmers and shepherds were without doubt the worst off from a material point of view.

In addition to this permanent servile labor force, the exploitation of the villa required a seasonal workforce, which was made up not of slaves but of smallholders and farmers from the vicinity, or groups of workers from other regions. The presence of slave villas did not therefore cause the modest or poor peasants from surrounding areas to disappear, whether they were landowners or not.

Did these slave villas represent a widespread model? Certain historians think that central and southern Italy abounded in them and that many could be found elsewhere as well. Others, on the contrary, insist on the fact that even in central Italy, there always were other types of agricultural estates.²³ We would only point out that these other types of estates do not necessarily make do without slave labor. For instance, the large-scale farmer who lived in the city or came from the city, and who rented a large plot of land, exploited this land thanks to his slaves. Like the owner, he could make his slaves work in teams.

Latin authors such as Columella and Seneca reprimanded those who

possessed immense expanses of land and left them in a state of neglect. Would these lands not appear to be what in modern times is called the “latifundium”— which is to say, vast areas belonging to absentee landlords, given over to extensive breeding, with a very low level of productivity?²⁴

The slave villa does not at all resemble the latifundium village. The immense, poorly kept properties of Roman times, unlike the modern latifundium, were not necessarily devoted to husbandry. Nor were they tied to slavery; some were cultivated by slaves, others not.

We have less information on husbandry than on agriculture. In Greece, it was sometimes practiced in conjunction with the household and the vegetable garden, sometimes separately. In the writings of Homer, the slaves who are mentioned most often are those who take care of livestock, and let us recall that in Arcadia, according to Philostratus, breeding required many slaves.

As to the Roman world, despite the pages that Varro and Columella devoted to husbandry, and despite the progress of archeology (particularly osteo archeology), we have little information about the role of slaves in this area, especially outside Italy. Husbandry is characterized at the very least by its heterogeneity. On the one hand, there is the maintenance of draft animals on the farm or at the villa. Raising hogs and poultry, and all forms of keeping small animals (birds, bees, snails, fish, etc.) were also practiced on the farm or the villa. On the other hand, there was the raising of large animals far from the farm, accompanied, in certain cases, by transhumance (or the moving of these animals seasonally between grazing areas). The servile workforce was not excluded from any of these forms of husbandry. Varro refers to slaves quite often in the context of animal husbandry at the villa: the young slave who feeds the donkeys, the one who chooses the geese when they are bought, etc. (Varro, *De re rustica*, 3.3.4; 3.10.2; 3.17.6). As to the breeding of large animals, there appear to have been many shepherd slaves, at least in Italy. According to Suetonius, the number of shepherd slaves was such that Julius Caesar forbade breeders to have less than a third of the shepherds born free (Suetonius, *Divus Iulius*, 42).

Shepherd slaves were supervised by a “master of the herd” (*magister pectoris*), himself a slave, who was the equivalent of the *vilicus* in agriculture. According to Varro, he had to know how to read and write, in order to keep records of everything that concerned the care given to the men as well as to the animals, and in order to keep the breeding accounts (Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.11.23; 2.2.20; 2.3.8; 2.10.10).

Manufacture and Commerce

In archaic and classical Greece, the line between agriculture and the other economic activities of the household is often blurred. Hector, trying to imagine his wife, Andromache, enslaved after the defeat, says to her: “Then far off in the land of Argos you must live, laboring at a loom, at another woman’s beck and call.”²⁵ In fact the servile trade that is best represented in classical Athenian texts is that of the *talasiourgos*, the weaver—a job that is generally reserved for women.

Among all the activities of transformation, the most slave-intensive seem to be the ones that are related to mining extraction, to work in the mines and the quarries. Several tens of thousands of slaves (of whom we know only a few names and epitaphs) worked the silver mines at Laurium in Attica, both in the tunnels and in the above-ground workshops. The sources evoke the relentlessness with which the earth was dug (Strabo, *Geography*, 3.2.9), which is not a sign of easy working conditions. Those whose existence left a trace are very rare: Atotas, a miner from Paphlagonia who loved Homer and treated himself to a fine epitaph associating his “effort” to that of the hero (he even proclaims himself a descendant of Pylaemenes, who was killed by Achilles!) (*IG* II², 10051). There is also Sosia the Thracian, who was bought for 6,000 drachmai—the highest price ever paid in Greece for a slave—and who supervised 1,000 slaves on behalf of Nicias. And then again an important manager like Antigenes, slave of Nicoboulos, who became the master of a mining workshop and set up his slaves in a grinding workshop (Demosthenes, 37.22).

There were also many slaves in urban shops and workshops, as we learn from numerous texts of Attic orators and from the accounts of public works: a third of the workforce was servile during the (highly skilled) finishing work of the Erechtheum in Athens in 408–407.²⁶ The use of slaves in the workshops was most profitable, as Plato states clearly: “So we must first of all lay down this as a fundamental rule in the State: no man who is a smith shall act as a joiner, nor shall a joiner supervise others at smith-work, instead of his own craft, under the pretext that, in thus supervising many servants working for him, he naturally supervises them more carefully because he gains more profit.”²⁷ There are many concrete examples of enrichment, starting with that of the father of Isocrates, “a middle-class citizen who owned flute-maker slaves and had, through their work, earned enough to be a *choregos* and have his sons educated.”²⁸ There is little doubt that material affluence came with owning worker slaves: the weapons and furniture that were made by the slaves of Demosthenes’ father turned the latter into one of the wealthiest Athenians of his time. On the other hand, the archeology of classical Greece offers little precise

information about the status of these slave owners, except through onomastics. The production of pottery, for instance, used many slaves, in spite of the ban on teaching painting to slaves mentioned by Pliny the Elder; but there are doubts about the only known epigraphic attestation, that of a certain Lydos, the slave painter from Myrina (circa 530–520).²⁹

With regard to the Roman world on the other hand, the *instrumentum* delivers a treasure trove of information. The word *instrumentum* refers to agricultural equipment, but also to all the tools and instruments of daily life. Some of these objects bear engraved marks, painted inscriptions or graffiti. The study of all of these inscriptions is called epigraphy of the *instrumentum*; it supplies information about craft and manufacturing activities, and in particular it makes it possible to determine the role that the slaves played in these activities.

The information is nevertheless uneven, depending on the branches of activity: abundant on bricks and tiles, amphorae and tableware, it becomes scarce for glass; because glass was usually recycled, very little is found in excavations. Many iron objects are not marked. Exceptions notwithstanding, products made of wood or textiles were destroyed. Some textiles were made in the homes of the wealthy by female slaves; but it is impossible to determine the extent of this domestic production at the end of the Republic or under the Principate. As for metals, mine extraction and primary metallurgy (the reduction of ores, which makes it possible to obtain metal ingots) are better known than secondary metallurgy (the making of objects). Certain ingots bear very interesting marks, and mining extraction is brought up in a significant number of texts and inscriptions (in particular the Vipasca inscriptions and the tablets of Transylvania).

In a given branch, some products indicate names or initials and others not: Italic sigillated ceramics bear names or initials, whereas black-varnished ceramics are adorned with simple little decorative motifs. Furthermore, not all pieces of the same product are marked: between the first and the third centuries CE, only certain bricks and tiles in the area of Rome have marks, which sometimes prove to be rich in information.

Although almost all types of activities used slaves, the scale of their presence was not the same at all times and in all places. Slaves played a part at various levels of the organization of workshops and factories: most were unskilled workers, others were technicians, craftsmen or managers. We have the least information on unskilled workers.

In the Roman world, two of the better-known sectors are very illustrative: the making of amphorae and the so-called Italic sigillated

tableware.

The production of wine or oil amphorae was closely linked to land ownership. The amphorae are indeed made as close as possible to the place where wine or oil was produced. The workshop could even be on the wine-producing estate, and belong to the owner of that estate. Thus, D. Manacorda excavated at Giancola in the territory of Brindisi workshops for producing oil amphorae that were part of the estate of a certain Visellius, a wealthy notable of the Ciceronian period.³⁰ The amphorae produced in these workshops, which were widely sold, particularly in the Adriatic and in the Po Valley, bore marks on the handles; one can read the names of twenty-five different slaves, all in the service of Visellius. These slaves made amphorae, and probably were foremen; it is therefore probable that other slaves were present who worked under their orders. The potters, freemen or slaves, did not always work as potters throughout the year. In the countryside in particular, they also participated in agricultural work. A passage from the jurisconsult Javolenus deals with slave potters (*figuli*) on a rural estate who, although they were potters, engaged in agricultural work (*opus rusticum*) for most of the year (*Digest*, 33.7.25.1, Javolenus).

There were also autonomous workshops, which were not necessarily very close to the estates. For instance, at the end of the Republic, in the same territory of Brindisi, somewhat further inland at Apani, workshops were set up whose amphorae bore the names of slaves of various owners. Unlike the workshops of Giancola, those at Apani had to be outside the agricultural estates. In southern Spain, under the Principate, oil was transported in wineskins, on the back of mules, to the banks of the Baetis River (the Guadalquivir), where the workshops for making amphorae were located.

In Rome, the wealthiest families used silver dishes. As to the relatively inexpensive table pottery, some was finer and better decorated than the rest. This is the case of the Italic sigillata, a red-slip pottery made between the middle of the first century BCE and the end of the first century CE. Production began in Arezzo—hence the name Arentine, which refers to this Italic sigillata pottery—and then spread to Pisa, Ostia, Pozzuoli, northern Italy, and even Lyon. Many Italic sigillata vases were found in the Roman camps on the banks of the Rhine. Some of the foremen, whose names appear on a certain number of these vases, were independent craftsmen. Others were probably paid employees. Some owned kilns, others did not. Those who did not had to pay fees to the potter who fired their vases.³¹ Of the two thousand six hundred fore-men whose names we know, five hundred (close to 20 percent) were slaves. The names show that in certain cases, several slaves belonging to the same owner were potters: a certain Rasinius

even owned some sixty slaves, all working at the production of Arentine ware. Among them: Certus, slave of Rasinius; Chrestus, slave of Rasinius; Draco, slave of Rasinius, etc. As in the case of wine and oil amphorae, the foremen had under their supervision other slaves, unskilled workers whose level was noticeably inferior.

But it would be wrong to believe that slaves were numerous in the making of all kinds of pottery or of all types of objects. There were many more of them in the Italic sigillata pottery of Arezzo than in the pottery of northern Italy. In the production of red-slipped sigillata pottery of southern Gaul (first and second centuries CE), at La Graufesenque for instance, there were very few slaves involved.³² Thus their numbers varied considerably according to what was being made and also according to the time and place.

In classical Greece as in the Roman world, slaves also had a role to play in commerce and banking and, generally speaking, in services. As a scholia of Demosthenes remarks: “the Athenian people were in the habit of buying slaves who knew how to read and write.” In Athens, in the fourth century BCE, there were even some slaves working in private banks (*trapēzai*) who, on being manumitted, succeeded their former master as head of the enterprise. This was the case of Pasion, a slave and collaborator of Antisthenes and Archestratus, who, just before 394 BCE, succeeded them as head of the bank. At his death in 370–369 BCE, Pasion in turn left the position neither to Antimachus, son of Antisthenes, nor to his own sons, Apollodorus and Pasicles, but to his former slave Phormio. Phormio himself was succeeded by four men who at the time were still slaves: Xenon, Euphraeus, Euphron, and Callistratus.³³ In businesses, slaves could represent their masters outside the city, for instance in Pontus.

The situation was the same in the Roman world, especially at the end of the Republic and during the first two centuries of the Empire. Certain slaves were charged by their masters with running a business or a bank. This is the case of the future Pope Callistus: under the reign of Commodus, this young slave in the service of a freedman of the emperor, Marcus Aurelius Carpophorus, was a professional moneychanger-banker (*nummularius*) in the city of Rome. His bank went bankrupt and, several decades later, after a spell in the mines of Sardinia and after his manumission, he became Pope (217–222) (Hippolyte, *Refutatio*, 9.13.1–12).³⁴ In the case of other slaves who were the assistants of a banker or a merchant, their master manumitted them before dying or in his will, and they succeeded him.

Thus we find slaves engaged in almost all economic activities. But no task is strictly reserved for them, even if, in certain sectors and in

certain periods, they are the predominant labor force. And it is their very status that occasionally prompts the masters to entrust them with positions of responsibility.

The Legal Organization of Slave Labor: Constraints, Benefits and Responsibilities

Duties, responsibilities, and training represent so and so many factors that led to significant inequalities among slaves. They did not all lead the same lives. We find among them an elite and the masses. Greek authors, for instance, distinguished between the worker and the *épitropos*, the overseer. Cicero also divides the slave world into two categories: skilled or very specialized slaves (such as blacksmiths or plasterers) and manager slaves—the slave elite. The former had to be competent in their field, the techniques of which they had to know well. The latter, on the other hand, did not have to be specialized; what was expected of them was not technical knowledge, but moral qualities: merit, probity, integrity. For it was to them that the paterfamilias entrusted his possessions (Cicero, *Pro Plancio*, 25.62). Curiously, Cicero compared their role to that of city magistrates; this means that he recognized in them a certain dignity, even though they were slaves. There was, then, a slave elite that some called the “privileged slaves.”³⁵

This strong hierarchy within the slave population did not prevent the belief that slaves, as a whole, were very inferior to free men and women. They all had to work in accordance with the will of their master, who supplied them with food and shelter. In the activities of daily life, this work took on diverse forms. It was often very hard, indeed almost unbearable (in the mines), but sometimes much more tolerable.

The organization of labor could also vary. The relative proportion of specialists and assistants in the workshops is often subject to debate. In taking stock of his father’s fortune, Demosthenes describes his sword-manufacturing workshop (27.9). The text can be understood in two ways. Either: “thirty-two or thirty-three sword-makers, each worth five or six minai, and some others worth not less than three.” Or: “thirty sword-makers, of whom two or three were worth five or six minai and the others not less than three.” If one brings the figures in line with the total size of the estate given further on, the first version is correct; yet it has often been rejected because, as Louis Gernet writes, “it is hard to believe that the non-skilled workers are less numerous.”³⁶ But the Athenian workshop was not a modern factory: the owner gathered together a group of qualified craftsmen with an

accompanying structure of a less qualified workforce. The entire technical process was carried out by each slave. We do not know whether this system was valid for all activities, or simply justified here by the technical difficulties involved in working on ivory for luxury knives intended for sacrifices and for the cavalry. In other cases, the foreman (*hēgēmôn*) was alone with a small group of slaves: among the leather workers of Arizelos, nine or ten slaves all brought in the same amount, two obols a day, whereas the foreman brought in three (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.97).

By what means could a slave, who was well known to be an object, a possession of his master, become a craftsman, a banker, a shopkeeper? How was the professional activity of slaves who had to contract with third parties legally organized? Did classical and Hellenistic Greece have such procedures? Greek treatises on the *oikonomia* rarely raise these questions, unlike the Roman world, which had more detailed legal reflections and more precise and coherent legal texts. We shall, therefore, set out Roman law before looking at how, in Greece, the slave's activity was legally conceived and sanctioned.

In Rome, regardless of the economic sector, the work of the slave could take three forms. Either he worked under the direct control of his master—and obviously for the profit of the latter—without this work relationship being legally sanctioned. Or he received from his master one or several properties, which continued to belong to the master but were made available to the slave; these properties, which were entrusted to the slave in the form of quasi property, constituted his *peculium*. Or, finally, through a document called the *praepositio* he was charged by his master with exploiting one of the master's properties, with the profits going to the latter.

We know about the function of these forms of activities from three types of sources: a few literary and philosophical texts; the epigraphy of the *instrumentum*; finally and especially, legal texts, almost all of which date back to the first three centuries of the Roman Empire. With respect to these sorts of questions, the literary texts are, unfortunately, disappointing. The reflections that they offer are very general, and mainly social: they insist on the importance of the *peculium* in the eyes of the slave as well as on the relationships of master and slave. They say almost nothing about the organization of businesses or about the way in which the slave managed his *peculium*. The literary texts touch on some individual cases of businessmen slaves, but in such vague terms that it is often not clear whether these slaves act within the context of a *praepositio* or of their *peculium*.

The fragments of legal texts collected in the *Digesta*, on the other hand, are teeming with details. They are not all equally representative

of common practices; some probably elaborate textbook cases. But even if they do not give information about the relative frequency of the various situations, they do offer a typology of all those that could occur.

When a *peculium* or a *praepositio* was involved, the business or work relations between slaves and a third party (clients of the shop or the workshop, etc.) were facilitated. For the third parties were thereby informed that the master was aware of the activity of his slave and that he authorized that activity. But the three forms of servile work were in no way mutually exclusive: a slave could both own a *peculium* and receive a *praepositio*, while simultaneously working directly for his master, according to the wishes of the latter. For instance, a slave who was his master's cashier (*arcarius*) worked directly for his master and under his immediate control when he managed the latter's money, but in most cases he was also in possession of a *peculium*.

Peculium and praepositio

How does one define the *peculium*? According to Ulpian, a great jurist of the early third century CE, "the *peculium* is that which the slave has in his hands with the permission of his master, and which has been set aside from the rest of the master's patrimony" (*Digest*, 15.1.5.4, Ulpian). The slave has to receive his master's authorization to acquire and manage it. The properties involved can be very diverse: a piece of land, livestock, a rental building, a shop, a workshop, a warehouse, slaves or money. Part of the *peculium* thus comes from the gifts and largesse of the master, but the slave increases his *peculium* by reducing expenses (for instance on the food rations given by his master) and through wages for jobs that he manages to carry out on his own. This obviously presupposes that the master leaves him the time for this business or personal work.

How was the master of the slave who had a *peculium* paid for his slave's activity? And how was the slave himself paid? By law, the *peculium* continued to belong to the master. But it was not customary to deduct regularly from it. And as long as manumission was not in play, the slave did not give regular explanations regarding the *peculium*. No text suggests that the master was in the habit of controlling the accounts relating to the *peculium*. As long as master and slave were alive, and as long as the slave was not manumitted, the latter managed his *peculium* while getting income from it.

Everything changed if the master agreed to manumit the slave or if he died. When the slave was to be freed, the master could ask him to return the whole *peculium*, or take back just a part. How much? It was

not unusual that the master exacted an amount equivalent to the purchase price of the slave— so that he could buy another slave of similar value: Pliny the Elder establishes that the purchase price of slaves is equivalent to the amount they must spend to be freed (*The Natural History* 7.39, 128–29). In his opinion, in order to be manumitted, slaves thus pay their market value. In any event, the thought that slaves have to buy their freedom for money, already recurrent in the work of Plautus,³⁷ is expressed in a large number of Latin texts up to the time of the Principate.

Sometimes a prior agreement was reached between master and slave. Yet this agreement did not represent an official constraint for the master: sometimes the slave prepaid the amount asked by his master without being sure that the early payment would assure his freedom. The risk that the master might change his mind disappeared in the second century CE, however: according to a constitution dating from the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (161–169), a slave who had paid to be freed (*suis nummis emptus*) was manumitted immediately, in spite of the possible opposition of his master.³⁸

If the master died after having made a will that granted manumission to the slave, many scenarios were possible, although one cannot determine the frequency of each of them. Either the deceased master left the slave his entire *peculium*. Or all or a part of the *peculium* was given to the heir. Or the master asked the slave to pay a regular amount to the heir until the time of his manumission—for instance five years after the death of the master. Or, on the contrary, it was the heir who is charged with helping the former slave.

Two passages, by Ulpian and Marcianus respectively, state that some heirs must regularly provide several freed slaves with *alimenta*, a sort of pension in money or in kind, which would assure their subsistence (*Digest*, 34.1.1, Ulpian, and 34.1.2, Marcianus).

The master, who remained the owner of the *peculium*, risked losing it if the slave did poorly in business. If, on the other hand, the slave prospered, the master usually got nothing for years. When the *peculium* had increased substantially, the future of the slave who would be manumitted became more certain and the master could take advantage of this by exacting a large deduction. On the other hand, if the master contented himself with the equivalent of the slave's purchase price, his profit was nonexistent or almost nonexistent. This did not mean that the master did not benefit from the ownership of this slave. His benefit resulted from the work done by the slave directly in his service, or within the context of the *praepositio*—that is, of a job performed outside the *peculium*. In this case, the *peculium* itself was not a source of profit for the master. The advantages that he drew from the *peculium* were more social than financial; and, if they were

economic or financial, they were indirect.

As for the slave, he put his *peculium* to good use and managed it as he wished, at least if he had the time. The master had the right to take back the *peculium* at any time, but normally he did not make use of this right. “The Romans always had more respect for the slave’s *peculium* than for his family,” explains the historian Henri Erman. “A typical master will have hesitated much more to touch the *peculium* of one of his slaves than to take back his wife or children.”³⁹

The *peculium* was the institutional expression of the freedom of movement that the slave enjoyed.⁴⁰ It was conceived in the slave’s interest—provided that the master granted it to him and afforded him the means to manage it. It was the product of intelligent social management of slavery. As Cicero says, if slaves had no hope of being manumitted, they could not tolerate their situation (Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Postumo*, 15). The *peculium* contributed strongly to giving them that hope. As for the master, since he retained the power to take back the *peculium* until the time of manumission, he continued to have a hold on the slave.

The existence of this system clearly does not mean that the masters were benefactors, attentive to the happiness of their slaves, nor that they were indifferent to the state of their fortunes. From the master’s point of view, the *peculium* also presented advantages: it motivated the slaves and, at the same time, encouraged them to take care of his business. The *peculium* was one of the pieces of the puzzle—the other pieces of which were direct work and the *praepositio*.

The logic of the *praepositio* is the opposite of that of the *peculium*. Here the slave managed a business (shop, workshop, bank, commercial firm) that came under the direct control of the master, that the master wanted to run to his own advantage. Some legal texts (in the *Digest*) contrast the *peculium* with the “money of the master” (*dominica pecunia*) and the “business of the master” (*negotium dominicum*) that the slave is charged with (*Digest*, 46.3.35, Paul). Similarly, the goods bought and sold by a slave in charge of a business were the goods “of the master” (*Digest*, 14.3.11.7, Ulpian). The master was thus the true businessman, and his responsibility was limitless; in the case of *praepositio*, he was fully involved in the activity of his slave.

It was through *praepositio*, then, that the master could make profits: the income from the business went directly to him. So, for instance, the income from a ship was intended for the accounts of the ship’s owner, who had appointed the slave captain of his ship (*magister navis*) (*Digest*, 14.1.1.15, Ulpian). In the same way, according to Cicero, the slave who oversaw the rural estate (the *vilicus*) had the money that he made on the sale of the harvest brought to his master,

the owner of the estate (Cicero, *De frumento*, 119).

Either the slave took on the task entrusted to him free of charge (*Digest*, 14.1.1.18, Ulpian, and 14.1.5, Paul) or he received a salary. In the latter case, his responsibility was a job (*operae*) for which he received a wage that was fixed and agreed on in advance (see also *Digest*, 14.3.12, Julianus). The fact that he sometimes worked “for free” did not mean that he got nothing out of doing so. Slaves too made choices, or accepted the choices of their masters. If at times he was not paid, it proves that he drew other advantages from the work. For instance, he was almost assured of being manumitted under favorable conditions, or the *praepositio* afforded him the time and occasions to take care of his own affairs. But, errors excepted, none of the texts indicate that the manager slave received a share of the profits. It was not the custom. Thus, unlike the slave with a *peculium*, the slave charged with a *praepositio* had to account for his management.

While the principle and the general rules of the *praepositio* were very homogeneous, the jobs to which a slave was appointed prove to be extremely varied. A passage from Ulpian offers an impressive sampling of this. He speaks of wholesale merchants who sell oil or grains, peddlers selling material on behalf of manufacturers or merchants; slaves selling bread in a bakery; house and building guards; mule- drivers; bankers and money lenders, etc. (*Digest* 14.3.5, Ulpian).

These texts insist on the fact that, within a business or a workshop, there were many manager slaves, and that their number was sometimes (but not always) a result of the division of work (*divisio officii*). In the banks and lending companies, those who received the deposits and the loans were distinct from those who, on the contrary, were charged with investing the money (*Digest*, 14.3.19.1 and 3, Papinian). In the case of a ship, a manager slave could be charged solely with collecting payment for transportation, whereas the master or another slave took care of signing contracts with clients.

To what social category did these slaves belong? The texts of the *Digest* show that they were an extremely heterogeneous group. Among them there were financiers and merchants (in oil and grains, for instance). But many fit a very different profile, and one also finds an entire population of shopkeepers, servers, and salesmen. Some were employees. The number of salaried employees was very small in Antiquity; slave managers constituted one of the groups in which they can be found. One of them worked for a baker and retailed the bread to clients. Another played the same role for a clothes merchant. Some warehouses, shops, or inns used several appointed slaves of this sort (*Digest*, 14.3.5.9, Ulpian; 32.91.2, Papinian; etc.). Others were in

charge of very modest small businesses or workshops.

Just as variable was the way in which the master controlled these shops or manufactures. In certain cases, he worked with the slave manager, and it was he who actually ran the business; in this instance control was strict. In other cases, on the contrary, there was almost no control. A text by the jurisconsult Gaius (second century CE) describes the case of a master who had put slaves in charge of managing an overseas business. He was in debt, and hoped to pay back his creditors with the profits from this overseas business. Unfortunately, the slave managers (*institores*) lost everything. It took time for the master to learn this, and meanwhile, he had manumitted some of the slaves. Without meaning to do so, in freeing his slaves the master committed fraud with respect to his creditors. For as a result of the failed business of his managers, he had become insolvent without having been informed of it (*Digest*, 40.9.10, Gaius).

If the master dedicated himself fully to his workshop or his commerce, the *praepositio* allowed him to introduce flexibility into the organization of his business. It helped to institute a certain division of labor, and gave responsibilities to slaves under the surveillance of the master. When the masters could not personally supervise their manager slaves, they tried to find other means of control. They sometimes increased the numbers of these slaves, but assigned the same jobs to several of them, without division of labor. The reasoning was that in this way the slaves kept an eye on each other. According to Ulpian, most masters were in the habit of putting several slaves in charge of the same company and forbidding its management by some without the others. Contracts with third parties could thus only be concluded when all the slave managers were gathered together (*Digest*, 14.1.1.14, Ulpian). Such practices could only render more cumbersome a managerial process that was already poorly controlled by the master.

Peculium and *praepositio* did not have the same function. *Peculium* aimed at giving the slave some advantages and some hope, provided of course that the master granted it to him and gave him the means to manage it. The *praepositio*, on the other hand, both in principle and in practice, had the master's profit as its goal. But the two were in no way mutually exclusive. In the city, in the milieu of commerce and the crafts, many slaves who lived in the immediate entourage of the master and who were managers surely had a *peculium* as well.

The two institutions complemented each other, then, since an acceptance by the slave of his social position could only be beneficial to the well-understood interests of the master, especially when the slave had acquired managerial or commercial experience.

Furthermore, both institutions generated and reproduced a slave milieu of “businessmen,” whose situation was often modest, to be sure, but who were very motivated by the prospect of manumission—provided they did not die too soon. *Peculium* and *praepositio*, working simultaneously, thus contributed to assuring dynamic economic activity, and it is understandable that they endured for so long. But we must not forget that whatever the arrangement, all slaves had to supply their masters with work. Very often, the masters put their slaves to good use without entrusting them with either a *peculium* or a *praepositio*. The agricultural slaves, shepherds, or miners earned money for their masters without receiving specific assignments.

The Organization of Slave Labor in Classical Greece

The Greek slave too was fed and dressed by the master; but what did he really possess? Usually everything he had belonged to the master. His salary is *trophè*, food, says Pseudo- Aristotle. At the same time, Pseudo- Xenophon writes that slaves “grow rich”: Phormion had nothing when he arrived as a “barbarian” who had been “purchased” (Demosthenes, *Apollodorus Against Stephanus*, 45.81), and then he grew rich. And it is possible to keep something from one master to the next; this was true for Myrmex, who worked for Aristotle (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, 5.14). The master could always punish the slave by confiscating his meager possessions (in the *Hero* of Menander, lines 6 ff., a slave wants to hide his savings from his angry master). The slave could, then, have his own belongings. In the trial of the *hermocopidai* and the sentencings that followed, the slave Aristarchus, a shoemaker, had his possessions confiscated; these were probably modest: furniture basically, including beds and tables. The state in Pergamum sentenced a slave to having his possessions seized (*OGI*, 483.172– 83). And the chance discovery of a monetary hoard was a bargain for the slave (Theophrastus, *Characters*).

How did the slave obtain what he had? In part through gifts from the master. The master could, in certain cases, “make him wealthy” (Xenophon, *Economics*, 14.9). It is difficult to identify a *peculium*, since the Greek texts do not refer to them. But the slave could be led to pay his manumission (the *lutra*, ransom). His status was thus a kind of debt that he could or could not pay back. In Greece as in Rome, the idea that the slave should have possessions could only emerge in connection with the practice of manumission. Were this not the case, what good would possessions be to the slave, since they belonged to the master and he could take them back? It was probably in the fourth

century BCE that manumission began to be common practice. From then on, slaves—in particular the *ēpitropoi*, or overseers (Xenophon, *Economics*, 14.9)—were given the jobs of free men, which made it possible to envisage manumission. When asked how he assured that a slave would be favorably disposed toward him and his family, Isomachus responded: “By kindly treatment of him, to be sure, whenever the gods bestow abundance of good things upon us”; “If I take your meaning rightly,” replies his interlocutor, “you would say that those who enjoy your good things grow well disposed to you and seek to render you some good?” (Xenophon, *Economics*, 12.6– 7). Because slaves, more than free men, need hope (5.16).

Did the Roman *peculium* system exist in Greece? The only text that offers some information is *Against Stephanus* by Demosthenes (80 ff.), which refers to exchanges between Pasion and his slave Phormio inside the bank, and which mentions the payment of an amount of money by Pasion. It is the only case in which reference is made to an income that could come from a “*peculium*.” For Aristotle, the *koînônia*, the community between master and slave, was a community of interests (*Politics*, 1.1255b 10– 15). The potential earnings of slaves depended on the organization of slave labor and on the possibilities of autonomy that were offered to them. In works on the *oikonomia* it is not clear whether slaves could have a specific reward for their work or live elsewhere than in their master’s home. In fact, Xenophon describes the opposite situation, whereby the mistress of the house had to keep an eye on the groups that left the house (Xenophon, *Economics*, 7.35).

Beyond traditional management, historians often describe two other possible situations: that in which the slave lived on his own, outside the home of his master (*chôris oikôn*), and brought the latter a rent calculated on a daily basis (the *apophora*), and that in which the slave was rented out and brought in a *misthos*. It is however very unlikely that the terms *apophora* and *misthos* were highly accurate from a legal point of view. The *apophora* has been much too closely associated with the slave who lived “on his own,” for this was not always the case. The meaning of *apophora* is broader, and cannot refer to a specific category. Pseudo- Xenophon writes: “It is in our financial interest to be slaves to our slaves, in order to make them pay an *apophora*.”⁴¹ The *apophora* was that which the slave brought back to his master, whatever the form of payment. Nothing indicates that this was a fixed amount rather than the excess of revenues over expenses. Perhaps it even took the form of rent in kind. It was also unlikely that the *misthos* was only used in the case of renting the slave out to a third party.⁴² To conclude, let us just say that, in the case of renting, only the

misthos was used and it always had to be tied to an amount, whereas the *apophora* could designate a part or the whole of the payment in kind that the slave entrusted to his master. The fact is that, in Greece, vocabulary relating to payment and earnings is not very precise—perhaps because the lexicon of domination is more developed there than that of economic exploitation and because, as Xenophon reminds us, the work of the slave consisted in bringing in a return (*phéreîn*).

Therefore, rather than basing ourselves on the different ways in which the master could profit from his slave, let us distinguish, for the Greek world, three types of organization of slave labor. First there was direct management, where the owner worked with the slaves, for he himself was skillful in the trade. In this case it is uncertain as to whether there was a slave in charge, and the only hierarchy that existed is strictly functional or physical.

The second type was direct management with a bailiff or steward: the *ēpitropos*. The master was responsible for expenses, even if it was the *ēpitropos* who paid them on a daily basis and took charge, for instance, of the slaves' food. The *ēpitropos* kept the books, which the master checked more or less closely. It was then up to the master to pay his slaves and especially the bailiff as he saw fit. Thus Moschion worked in a house that did not belong to his master Comon, and was well informed about the financial reserves of the latter (Demosthenes, 48.14–15). This practice was not confined to urban workshops: on the agricultural properties of Aphobos, there was a slave who “knew well all the facts” (Demosthenes, 30.27). Such a slave could live far from the master, but it was unlikely that he was *chōris oikōn*, “living on his own.” For under this arrangement, the owners continued to play an essential role (Demosthenes, 53.20–22).

There was a third type of organization that gave more freedom to the slaves in charge. Each of these slaves paid their masters a fixed amount of *x* obols a day. Thus the young Demosthenes rebuilt his father's fortune with a regular income from each slave. In this case, there was a formal agreement and maybe a contract between the master and, if not his slaves, at least the person who was in charge of them, who could himself have been a slave or a freedman. The expenses were payable not by the master, but by the slave in charge of the workshops, except when there was no activity in the workshop (Demosthenes, 37.20). Similarly, revenues from direct sales were not paid back to the master, except in the case of unsold articles, which had to be handed over by the lessor to the owner (Demosthenes, 37.21).

The mines of Laurium were probably subject to the same type of contract between Nicias and his Thracian bailiff Sosius, whose job it

was to maintain the number of slaves at the mine (Xenophon, *On Revenues*, 4.17). One encounters this practice in commercial or financial businesses: the banker Phormion was in charge (*kyrios*) of sums of money with regard to his master Pasion, and he was contractually obliged to hand over a fixed amount to the owner. As for the slave Lampus (Demosthenes, 34), he traded cargoes in the Black Sea and even had the possibility of benefitting from a fiscal exemption by the State, an “*atēleia*.”

Can this responsibility with which the slaves were charged take on the form of a contract? Was it really possible to sign a contract with a slave? In the case of Greece, we know nothing about this. It is also a question raised by the meaning of *chôris oikôn*, the slave “living on his own.” Was he really a slave? What was a slave who “lives on his own”? In fact, the term only appears twice, in the middle of the fourth century, in the same author. It refers to a category that is peculiar to the city: in the *First Philippic* Demosthenes mentions the enlistment on ships “of metics and *chôris oikountēs*, then of citizens, etc.” The second instance clearly concerns a manumitted slave (Demosthenes, 47.72). The first use appears to refer to a well-defined group within Athenian society. It is therefore tempting to compare them to manumitted slaves. In fact, the position of the manumitted slave conceals intermediary statuses between pure- and- simple slavery and full freedom.⁴³ This is confirmed by Athenian documents that register manumitted slaves who have been officially recognized as free after a trial: the latter are well identified by a place of residence (for example, “Plinna living in Piraeus”: *IG* II/III², 1553.18)—but they obviously already had this distinction before they were “officially” manumitted. It is unlikely that the notion of “living on one’s own” was a simple geographical reference, for it would then be truly banal, since the slaves that worked in a workshop or in the fields did not necessarily live in the house of the master either. This notion therefore has a more legal meaning, implying a certain degree of independence and a legal responsibility toward the master; it can be considered the Greek precursor of *praepositio*. It is probable that these *chôris oikountēs* were often freedmen, but the possibility that slaves could also benefit from this autonomous position should not be ruled out.

A Slave Economy?

As we explained in the first chapter, the notion of “slave society” is in no way equivalent to that of “slave economy.” The former is a social notion that concerns the place that slaves occupy in society, and the influence slavery exercised on the ways of thinking and the practices

of society as a whole. We believe it is useful and enlightening to define Greco- Roman society as a slave society. The notion of “slave economy,” usually linked to the concept of “slave mode of production,” concerns primarily economic production and is directly related to a Marxist analysis of history. In Western Europe, the question of a “slave mode of production” was much discussed during the 1960s and especially the 1970s, in anthropology as well as in history. Since the 1980s it is hardly ever referred to, and this is a mistake—not because it would be desirable to adopt an evolutionist philosophy of history that was impugned by Marx himself (that of historic stages: slavery, feudalism, and capitalism), but because Marxism represents a way of taking a comparative approach to the functioning of economies, and particularly of pre- industrial economies. But this is not the place to go back over these points in detail. We therefore limit ourselves to two or three remarks, to justify our choices.

In Greek and Roman Antiquity, there were slaves in almost all sectors of the economy. But there were many more in certain sectors and in certain places than in others, in certain periods than in others. The numbers are important, but they are not enough; they are not at the heart of the analyses of Karl Marx, nor of those of many Marxists. A slave economy must be shaped in a specific way by slavery. The objective, then, is to understand the way in which slavery plays a role in the evolution of the economy: how does the presence of slaves modify the Greco- Roman organization of production or the provision of services?

The massive presence of slaves that we have observed in agriculture and husbandry in peninsular Italy and Sicily at the end of the Roman Republic and under the Principate falls first within the organizational structure of “plantation slavery,” or “gang slavery.” According to Xenophon, this structure certainly existed already in Attica in the fourth century BCE, but in a much more limited way. The slaves of an estate exploited the whole of it; they were divided into groups according to principles that paralleled, to a certain extent, military organization; and they were commanded by other slaves, team leaders and stewards. There were also settler- slaves, who were given a plot of land that they cultivated as small farmers or free sharecroppers. Available evidence indicates, however, that the latter were few in number. In spite of the diversity of situations and cultures, it is plantation slavery that predominated in those times in central Italy. This specific organization of labor, based on slavery, was negligible or nonexistent when the workforce was not servile. But is this not the very definition of the “slave mode of production”? Did this “slave mode of production” of the plantations shape the whole economy? In

other words, was the entire Antique economy dominated by slavery? If we thought so, we would use the expression “mode of production” in the broad sense, which was favored by Marxist thought: namely, an organization of production that dominates and determines the entire economic life of a society. Is this the case in Greece or Rome? We do not think so. Neither in the mines nor in the pottery workshops did the presence of slavery allow for the elaboration of a specific organization of production. Therefore we do not think that the functioning of the Antique economy was dominated or determined by the existence of slavery and servile work. Social relations, yes, but economic life as a whole, no. If indeed there was a slave mode of production in Antiquity, it was only in a particular sector and with respect to specific social relations.

Furthermore, our objective is not only to determine whether there was or was not a slave economy. To what, indeed, would it be in contrast? To consider slavery as economically specific does not help in understanding the phenomena that were common to all non-industrial economies throughout history—that is to say all those economies that used writing and currency, and that moreover were governed by some form of state and very strong social distinctions. For instance, we do not think that, within these slave societies, banks, interest-bearing loans, and exchange transactions were very different in their *raison d'être* and their functioning from what they became subsequently in feudal societies.

Is there a logic to slavery other than that of domination, which is the one that prevails in the representation of the Ancients? Can one speak of an economic rationale behind slavery? The debate was present in the reflection on slavery undertaken in the south of the United States in the nineteenth century; but one must take note of the fact that in the United States real capitalist interests were at play in cotton production. Can slavery seem appealing? If one buys slaves, does it not mean that such purchases are attractive at a certain time and in certain places? The Antique texts claim that having slaves can be very profitable. As Pseudo- Aristotle said, “the slave is the most ‘*oikonomic*’ good.” From the beginnings of slavery, the possession of slaves represented an opportunity. We are therefore not sure that, as Finley maintains, a *need* must be invoked in order to explain the introduction of chattel slavery into Athens under Solon.

It is better to focus on slavery’s intrinsic features as a social institution than on its profitability. For the question of its profitability implies a global comparative study, which it is impossible to complete. Furthermore, why compare the profitability of antique slavery to that of a salary- based economy that did not really exist,

except marginally and in a very localized way? The disadvantage of the latter system of employment, when compared to slavery, lies in its extreme discontinuity: the market of men who are employed as daily workers at the agora of Athens stands out by the brevity of their contracts. Slavery, on the contrary, brings a permanency of employment that free men cannot guarantee. Another advantage of slavery is its flexibility; exceptions notwithstanding, a slave is not a specialist—he can be transferred without difficulty from land to sea. When, in certain milieus, the wish to diversify sources of income took hold, while the purchase price of slaves remained sufficiently low and their supply regularly assured, slaves represented an excellent economic solution.

Unlike Karl Marx, who had a very “primitivist” conception of Antique economy, Max Weber insisted on the drawbacks of slavery, and especially on the importance of accumulated capital for buying slaves. This immobilization led to a slowing up of the formation and circulation of capital. Moreover, the purchase of slaves proved to be a very risky operation, because of high mortality rates and considerable price fluctuations. In the long run, there was a devaluation of capital invested—all obstacles to a reliable calculation of the costs of production. Finally, the “ethical” qualities of slaves were very weak: they showed a total lack of interest in the enterprise. The system was thus not valid unless numerous external conditions were met. These included, in particular, low prices and a local division of labor, so that the rate of profit was significant enough to offset all the risks.

There was, then, a contradiction between the low financial return of slavery and its appeal. The equilibrium that had to be reached and maintained was fragile. It implied a will to make slaves profitable in order to diminish economic risks and to increase their motivation, by granting them greater independence and promising them manumission. But this choice has an important consequence: it transforms the use of slaves. It is a “displacement of their exploitation: rather than being the object of capitalist exploitation as a means of production in order to achieve a ‘profit,’ they are used to generate an income and the proceeds of ransom.”⁴⁴

This is why the presence of slaves in the economy did not lead, in a lasting way and in all regions, to a specific division and recomposition of labor, in order to draw from the servile workforce more business *profits*. What the master gains from slavery is basically an *income*. The possibility of manumission makes slavery more viable and revives the slaves’ motivation. But it also contributes to transforming slavery into *income*. In short, to make slavery more profitable, it was necessary to allow the slave to set himself free from it.

5 THE SLAVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE CITY

Is the Slave Part of Society?

Is the slave part of Ancient society? What is his place in it? Theoretically, in the realm of ideas and social consciousness, the slave is not part of society. Through enslavement he suffers what Orlando Patterson has called “social death.”¹ His status is characterized by absences: the absence of liberty and of the qualities inherent in the category of free people—from physical beauty to freedom of will, the power of decision and dignity. His condition is also marked by domination and violence.

The slave is an object; he is not a human being in the same way as free men and women. He has no rights and is looked upon as a simple piece of property “with a soul”—to use the words of Aristotle, for whom the slave is not part of the city. Ancient texts shroud him in silence: a “code of silence” has been alluded to.² We might, of course, ask ourselves whether this silence is reserved for slaves or whether it does not also apply to the poorest of free men. In speeches that evoke the city or the Empire, with their celebrations and important collective events—funeral orations in Athens, political speeches, official documents—and that therefore represent the whole of society, the orators are clearly not addressing slaves, who are not even named. In everyday life slaves are not mentioned, or as infrequently as possible, a sign of their place in society. When the poet Horace writes: “I am in the habit of going for walks alone,” we learn, five lines later, that he is with one of his three slaves. Even as property, the slave in Athens is part of that “invisible fortune” that is more readily concealed, like cash. Nor is he very visible in archeological finds: it is rarely possible to determine exactly where and how he lived. There is therefore a risk in trying to recreate the slaves’ own “voice”; one stands a better chance of recreating the representations that others had of them.

When the slave is associated with an anthropological category, it is that of the alien: he is the alien par excellence, indeed the classic example of the “barbarian.” In fact, he represents a potential danger to the community in which he lives. Imperfect by definition, he can be harmful.

Nevertheless, because of their numbers and their important role in economic life, slaves constitute an integral part of society. Moreover,

the slave works; he is present in a household and a city; he eats and drinks (even if it is less than most free men). He can even play a significant role, thanks to the bond of trust that is sometimes established between his master and himself. If a serious threat weighs on the whole of civil society—a war, for instance—the state can decide to make use of slaves for the good of the community, in which case they are issued a command. Thus in 338, after the defeat of Chaeronea, the authorities of Athens—imitated some hundred years later, during the Second Punic War, by their Roman counterparts—manumitted or promised to manumit slaves who had been “mobilized” in this manner.

The slave is not free; he belongs to someone. In the eyes of the law, he is the property of a man or a woman. On the basis of that single, albeit obvious, fact many historians, and in particular German historians of the school of “Mainz,”³ believed they could sum up the overall status of the slave. Their objective was to show that the slave was seen not only as a “thing,” but also as a human being. In their eyes this was a major reason for de-emphasizing the moral severity of Ancient society, and according greater significance to its leniency. They were right to claim that the slave was seen not only as an object but also as a man; in our opinion, however, they were wrong as to the meaning of slave ownership.

The fact that the Ancients recognized the slave as a human being had no effect on the harshness of his fate, since they had not developed a conception of “human rights.” Viewing the slave as property implied both that the slave-holder had rights over him and that he received greater recognition inside the household than outside. But the question is complex. It is probably preferable to speak of household rather than of family; it is through the household and the master’s lineage that the city sometimes offered the slave what may have been the closest thing to true recognition.⁴

Socially dead, simple object ... As negative as the notion of slave may have been, the Greek city and the Roman Empire nonetheless elaborated a kind of slave status, valid for all slaves and which was not purely negative; thus, for instance, *peculium* and *praepositio* in Rome. But this status necessarily represents a departure from the theory of slavery, and it does not account for the extreme diversity of slave conditions, from the miner or the farmer to the domestic slave, intellectual or doctor, and to the public slave. Thus Claude Meillassoux makes a distinction between the “legal principal” of slavery—which we call the status—and the “seemingly infinite variety of individual conditions.”⁵ It is one of the successes of slave societies,

and particularly of Antique slave societies, that they maintained both the unity of the legal principle and the extreme diversity of conditions.

The slave's life in the household and the city has many aspects, and for each of them we have details that are abundant and often very illustrative, albeit fragmentary.

There are both important similarities and many small differences between Greece and Rome. In this chapter, we address successively: the life of the slave in the household and his relationship with his master and mistress; his role (or the absence thereof) in the city, particularly in worship, war and politics; finally, the thinking of the Ancients on slavery. Each section will deal with Greece first and then with Rome.

The Slave and His Masters in Greece

In a comedy by Menander a slave declares: "My master is my city, my refuge, my law and the tribunal for what is right and wrong; with this alone I must live." A slave's relationship with his master structures most of his life. That relationship takes on various forms according to the latter's life circumstances.

In Greece, after being purchased, the slave was welcomed into the household, the *oikos*; *katachysmata*, nuts and dried figs, were strewn over his head, as was also the tradition for a bride. If the slave's status seems to resemble that of the woman, the similarities are nonetheless limited. This ritual of introduction is primarily a symbol of the benefits that the slave can bring to the household through his work. It is a ritual of protection more than of welcoming into the family, of exorcising the alien that he is before integrating him into a community. According to some interpretations, it may even be a rite of passage for the community as a whole, more than for the *oikos*.⁶ We do not know what happened when a slave was born in the home; probably nothing was organized. Consequently historians now acknowledge that slaves belonged not to the family but to the household, like a possession, *ktèma*, and, moreover, in the case of Greece, like an "invisible" possession. It is very difficult to quantify the slave population because nobody gave it a thought: in speeches relating to his estate, Demosthenes makes a list of the slaves who bring in a profit and are part of the *income*, but fails to indicate the total number of his slaves.

Once the slave has been bought and introduced into the household, the master must take charge of everything. The slave's maintenance

and material existence are tied to the master and are at the heart of the life of the slave. The city has no law constraining the master; he alone decides what is a proper life for a slave. Although it is therefore difficult to generalize, common practice attests to the modesty of resources allocated to slaves, who are usually reduced to poverty. In Greece, reference is often made to a daily food ration of a *choenix* (about 800 grams) of barley flour. In a play by Menander, two *choenikes*, which is the norm for free men, sounds like a true feast. But rations vary according to the master's mood and to regional practices: slaves are better off in the homes of the traditional aristocracy than in those of the nouveaux riches (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1042); Theophrastus's miser uses old measurements, which are smaller (Theophrastus, *Characters*, 30.7); in Egypt—where slaves are less common—annual rations of bread reached 557 kg. in the third century BCE, according to Zeno's archives (by way of comparison, the current minimum of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] is about 250 kg.). Meals remain modest and are eaten separately (except in the case of poor owners, and except perhaps during feasts). The texts refer to the "slave's portion," *doulîè trophè* (Sophocles, *Ajax*, 499), or sometimes identify specific foods, like the "slave bread roll," *kollîx*.

Food is also subject to what we might call cultural restrictions, which the slave encounters often in his life. For instance, Pseudo-Aristotle forbade slaves to drink wine. But starting in the fourth century, things evolved in this respect; public slaves could frequent taverns (Isocrates, *Areopagiticus*, 7.49), and in Hellenistic Egypt, rations included oil and wine. In the first century BCE, at Kyme in Asia Minor, the wealthy Archippus provided his slaves with *trophè* and *opsônion*, that is to say, a complete diet.

The master dressed and housed the slave. The clothing provided had features that, in theory perhaps, made it possible to set slaves apart; in reality it made them resemble the poor; this is the case of a cap, the *pîlos*, of the tunics, *exomidai*, bought for public slaves at Eleusis in 329, or a coarse frock, *katônakè*, often mentioned by glossators as being peculiar to slaves and freedmen. It is therefore likely that a slave was not easily recognized in the street. Pseudo-Xenophon writes about Pericles' Athens: "If there were a law which allowed the free citizen to strike a slave, often he would have mistaken an Athenian for a slave and struck him. For the Athenian people do not distinguish themselves from the slaves and the metics, either by clothing or by a superior personal appearance."⁷ This is confirmed at trials: in Demosthenes (47.61), a free man is taken away as a slave.

Nonetheless, the slave is prohibited from wearing certain clothing.

For instance, he cannot wear the *chlamys*, which is reserved for cavalrymen and soldiers. He can also be recognized by physical traits that are peculiar to him; a bent neck (as the poet Theognis observes), an unkempt body, hair that is always short, on both men and women. Freedmen let their hair grow so they can be told apart from slaves. Since clothes depend on the attitude of the master, however, some slaves can be better dressed than poor free persons. The master's social position and prestige are at stake: according to what he makes of his slave, he will be called *eudoulos* (he who treats his slaves well) or *kakodoulos* (he who treats his slaves badly).

Housing also seems to vary somewhat, although archaeology reveals little about this. According to the texts, domestic housing in Greece, unlike that in Rome, featured a clear separation between the space reserved for men and that reserved for women. But the archeological reality of the Greek world indicates rather that space was divided in an asymmetric manner between the two sexes: specific areas belonged to the master of the household, while the rest of the space was distributed in a fluid way. The slave necessarily lived in this loosely defined space.⁸ He did not have a particular place; he lived where he worked, often in the shops or near his master. He might even, for instance, sleep in his master's room if a baby was present, so as to be ready to wake up at night. He was simultaneously present and absent, as it were. The result was probably a lack of intimacy in the life of slaveholders and slaves alike. In some instances, relations of physical proximity were also established, for instance between the mistress and her female slaves, who could more readily get out of the house. Although Xenophon speaks of a separation between male and female slaves (*Economics* 9.5), the reality was probably different. The only space clearly reserved for slaves was on the agricultural estates; it was the tower, the *pyrgos*, that appeared in ever-growing numbers on Greek farms starting in the fourth century (Demosthenes, 47.56) as agricultural activities developed. The increasingly widespread presence of these towers appears to be the consequence of the growing use of slaves in agriculture.⁹

The slaveholder was interested in the physical condition of his slaves. When he bought them, it was essential for him to know about their "hidden defects." Reference was made to slave medicine (Plato, *Laws*, 4.720), which was obviously inferior in quality. But slaves also aroused the interest of the best doctors. The Hippocratic medical corpus presents cases of slaves and reveals more about the social realities of slaves than many nonmedical texts: about work-related illnesses, fatigue, the absence of care, malnutrition and the number of meals, and even about contagion—particularly with respect to female

slaves, who went out more often than their mistresses.

If it was in the master's interest, the slave received an education. He learned his master's trade, provided the latter had one. "[I]f, when the fellow was for sale, a cook or an artisan in any other trade had bought him," writes Demosthenes, "he would have learned the trade of his master," but he was bought by a banker who "taught him letters and instructed him in his business and put him in control of large sums of money."¹⁰ Generally speaking, when a slave had a professional activity, it was a sign of quality: "zealous slaves became workers, ship managers, merchants, stewards or lenders"¹¹; the others were servants. If one did not want to or could not teach them, they were purchased with existing qualifications (Xenophon, *Economics*, 12.3) or they were put into specialized schools. Aristotle mentions a "slave's science" that was taught in Syracuse (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1255b 23); this was probably household service. We know of no equivalent in classical Greece to the apprenticeship contracts attested in Hellenistic Egypt, but they probably existed. As for female slaves, if need be, they learned the courtesan's trade (Demosthenes, 59.18).

Education constituted one of the major problems of slave ownership. Xenophon pointed out that buying a slave who was well trained as a bailiff was very costly (Xenophon, *Economics*, 12.3). It could be worth the master's while to purchase a young slave and to educate him, at least if specific tasks or responsibilities were required—indeed to have him born at home. Home-born slaves (*oikogēnēis*) enjoyed greater respect:

—Does he know Greek?

—Perfectly; he was born at my place.¹²

Likewise, a scholiast writes: "Of course we have greater confidence in the slaves born and raised in the household than in those who have been bought."¹³ At least in the classical period, however, *oikogēnēis* were rare: at the end of the fifth century BCE, of the forty-four slaves mentioned in the estates of the "sacrilegious," whose possessions were confiscated in 414 (*IG* I³, 421), only three are referred to as having been home-born. Among the slaves mentioned by Demosthenes, only one might have been (Demosthenes, 53.19).¹⁴

Thus there are lettered slaves—and not only those who, by way of punishment, were branded with "letters," as Aristophanes reminds us! The slave Xanthias in *The Frogs* engages in literary commentary. It is also true that life circumstances may have transformed free men into

slaves. Despite the appearance of social promotion that it represents, however, this education had nothing in common with the one that free people receive, since the slave was officially excluded from the circles of *paideia*: gymnasiums (Solon's laws in Athens) and the theater. His training was by definition professional, something that the free man did not usually seek. It is commonplace to evoke the low level of supposedly "educated" slaves; slave teachers were criticized for the quality of their teaching (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 4a–b). The slave was, by nature, inferior, and it was impossible to make him good. The slave thought no farther than his stomach, writes Euripides. At best he could be useful and faithful to his master, but when he learned something it was a nuisance. The Greek texts argue that "there is nothing worse than a slave, even if he is a good slave"; "even the best of slaves is bad."

Slaves made themselves useful, however. In addition to serving in their professions, they were everywhere: they did the shopping at the marketplace, got water, watched the children, answered visitors, cooked, carried messages and performed all possible tasks. Ties were thus forged with the masters and mistresses. Xenophon encouraged his young wife to work with the slaves (Xenophon, *Economics*, 10.10–11). Evidence of affection is obvious (Lysias, *Against Simon*, 3; Demosthenes, 36.8 and 47.59). Some slaves had privileged relations with their masters, particularly the nannies and confidants, who accompanied their master everywhere—even to public activities such as arbitrage, choruses or banquets, even military operations. Slaves knew everything in the household, and they played the role of confidant. What a dream it is to have a good slave: it is the greatest of treasures, writes Menander, but a fragile treasure. Plato (*Laws*, 6.776c ff.) successfully recreates this two-sided image of slaves: they are as good as brothers but, at the same time, the worst enemies of the family—not to speak of slaves who, because they love their master, become the enemies of their fellow slaves, potential "traitors" (Euripides, fr. 50).

What can be said about the family and sex lives of slaves? Slaves had no more right to marry than to own property. Evoking the wife or husband of a slave is purely rhetorical. No mention is made of unions but, at best, of permission to "make babies" (*tecnopoïesthai*) (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Economics*, 1.5.6). We know of children of slaves; for instance Phormion (Demosthenes, 34.37),¹⁵ or Bion, who was sold with his parents (Diogenes Laertius, 4.46). In *Against Athenogenes*, Hyperides refers to a slave who lives in his shop with his two children. Did practices evolve in Hellenistic Greece? Families of slaves (or of freedmen) are represented on funerary stelae—as if, at the end of his

life, the slave earned the right to the same representations as free men and women.

The slave's sex life was also subject to constraints and stereotypes. Female slaves were obviously even more vulnerable than other women, and thus particularly exposed to uncontrolled passions. Often close to the masters, they represented dangerous rivals for free women (Xenophon, *Economics*, 10.12). In order to suppress the competition, Aristophanes' Praxagora forbids slaves to associate with free men (Aristophanes, *Assembly of Women*, 721). The female slave could become a concubine, *pallakè* (Isaeus, *On the Estate of Pyrrhus*, 3.39), indeed the favorite servant, *abra*. Affairs of mistresses with male slaves are less often referred to, other than in a demeaning manner. Except in certain cities, the children of these unions were slaves (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1278a 26). Even though the master could decide to manumit the offspring, little changed between the classical era and the second century BCE, as is attested by certain passages from Menander, or again by the case of the tyrant Athenion (Athenaeus, 5.211d).

The true preserve of the slave is "public" sexual life—prostitution, which, despite what certain present-day commentators think, one is hard put to present as an example of modern contractual commercial relations. It usually involved a great deal of misery and exploitation. And certain cases exceed even these norms; such is that of Neaera, in fourth-century Athens, which we know about from a speech by Demosthenes: bought by Nicarete at about twelve and brought to Corinth with a dozen other girls, she had a tumultuous life and many rich clients, such as Lysias. At twenty or so, she was bought for three thousand drachmas by two clients, who made her their personal slave before manumitting her two years later, for two thousand drachmas—perhaps out of financial calculation, to avoid the trouble of having to find a new buyer at a higher price. She then shared the life of a citizen, Stephanus, with whom she had three children—if they were indeed his children. They were in any case recognized as such.

Familia Rustica and Familia Urbana

The life of the Roman slave and his relations with his masters prove to be very similar to those of Greek slaves. The Latin word *familia* refers to all the dependents of the *paterfamilias*, and in particular all his slaves. The Romans divided the latter into "urban slaves," the *familia urbana*, and "country slaves," slaves of the land, the *familia rustica*. "The rural slave and the urban slave can be told apart not by place, but by type of work," wrote the jurist Paul (*Digest*, 33.10.12, Paul).¹⁶

For instance, the *insularius*, who looked after an apartment house for which he also collected the rent, belonged to his master's urban slaves, no matter where he lived, because he took care of living quarters. Likewise for the servants of country residences. On the other hand, the treasurer (*dispensator*), who was in charge of the accounts of agricultural estates (*rusticarum rerum rationes*), was tied to the farm slaves, because his functions involved working the lands (*Digest*, 50.26.166 pr., Pomponius). If slaves who lived in town were engaged in rural tasks on a long-term basis, they too were considered to be farm slaves. Was this frequent? For the large domains, certainly not; farm slaves on large estates definitely lived in the countryside, on the master's estate. But perhaps some farm slaves of small landowners lived in town with their masters; this arrangement was probably not exceptional in small cities, where the difference between town and country was less pronounced and the distance between the urban center and the lands very short.

When a census was taken, the slaveholder was obviously required to declare all his slaves, rural as well as urban. They were all part of his estate, and he declared them as such (see Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 32.80). To this end, he drew up, or had drawn up, lists of the slaves within his household and on his properties: the *libelli familiae*. These lists made it possible to know the names of the farm slaves and the urban slaves (*Digest*, 32.99 pr., Paul), and to update what can be called their civil status: age, origin, means of acquisition (*Digest*, 50.15.4.5, Ulpian).¹⁷ Indeed, as slave births and deaths were not declared to the authorities, it is these lists, kept for the master, that played that role to an extent. They also made it possible to know if there were "unions" (de facto marriages) among the slaves, and which slaves "belonged" to other slaves within the context of *peculium*.

When they were numerous, house slaves were divided into groups, which the Latins called, among other things, *decuriae*—a word referring to groups of ten, and that can be translated as "brigades" or "teams." In the *Satyricon*, we learn that Trimalchio's head chef, in his city home, belongs to the fortieth brigade; this satirical detail, meant to emphasize the character's very large number of house slaves, is nonetheless not far removed from certain realities. Indeed, Seneca alludes to a freedman of Pompeii, Demetrius, who in the first century BCE had become as rich as, indeed richer than, his former owner; every day he was given an account of the number of his slaves—the way one gives an account to a general of the state of his troops (Seneca, *On Tranquility of Mind*, 8.6). Similarly, under the reign of Nero, at the very time when *Satyricon* is supposed to have been written, it was known that the prefect of the city, Pedanius Secundus,

who was killed in 61 CE by one of his slaves, kept four hundred of them in his house in Rome (Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.42).

Some of these four hundred house slaves worked directly for their master or his close relatives living in the house. Others could have been shopkeeper or craftsmen slaves, who ran a shop or a workshop and thus worked in the city while living under their master's roof; still others saw their work rented out. This latter arrangement could be profitable for the master, especially if the slave had technical or artistic skills.¹⁸

The imperial household as well as those of the emperor's close relatives and of the main senatorial lineages had dozens or even hundreds of urban slaves. The names and functions of some of these slaves have been passed down to us by way of literary texts and the large collective graves of the Roman masses, the *columbaria*. For reasons that are difficult to pin down, almost all of these *columbaria* are from the first century CE, and more specifically, from the first half of that century.

The *columbarium* with the most inscriptions is that of the slaves and freed-men of Livia, wife of Augustus. Uncovered in 1726, it had been used from the end of the reign of Augustus to that of Claudius. It offered enough room to deposit the ashes of one hundred and ten dead. Except for a few servants belonging to Augustus and to Livia's son and daughter-in-law, most of the deceased were the slaves and former slaves of Livia herself, or the slaves, former slaves and children of her former slaves. The functions of some of the deceased, particularly the least qualified servants, are not mentioned. We can assume that a woman owned more female servants than a man. Yet among the dependents whose names are inscribed on Livia's *columbarium*, only 35 percent are women.¹⁹ But not all city slaves were given a funeral inscription; perhaps women were more numerous among those who were not.

Among the *columbaria* of private villas, one of the most important and best studied is that of the Volusii Saturnini, an important senatorial lineage from the time of Augustus and the first century CE.²⁰ It is located at the second mile of the Via Appia, and on it, 188 inscriptions have been deciphered, which bear the names of nearly 350 slaves and freedmen. The large majority are men, especially among the dependents whose functions are indicated: more than 70 men, as opposed to some 10 women.

This information makes it possible to distinguish between servants proper, dedicated to the service of people and to the maintenance of the household, and those one can call employees, who manage the master's possessions, his money, his correspondence, his social

relations. These employees have several types of jobs, which can be grouped into two categories: on the one hand the managers and administrators, on the other the secretaries. These slaves are not all equal: there are one or several hierarchies; at the top of the pyramid we find the *dispensator*, the treasurer, who was simultaneously a kind of steward of the household. Generally speaking, he had command over the *arcarii* (cashiers) and the *tabularii* (accountants), who also kept records of household management. Among the secretaries, we should mention the transcribers (*librarii*) and the *a manu* or *ad manum*, who, in taking down the letters dictated by their master, played an important role.

An elite household, like that of Livia or the Volusii, included a large number of actual servants. Some were at the service of individuals (footmen, masseurs, etc.). Others took care of the kitchen and table service; others of clothing; yet others of cleaning and surveillance of the premises, of invitations, of the welcoming of clients (in the ancient sense of the word) and of visitors; still others were responsible for furniture, precious objects and jewelry, silver dishes—either for maintaining and arranging them, or for making them. These households contained entire small-scale workshops (with, for instance, carpenters and cabinetmakers), the activities of which addressed internal needs only.²¹

In modest circumstances, if there were house slaves, they numbered only one or two. On the funerary inscriptions of men and women of modest means, the names of their servants, be they slaves or freedmen, appear fairly often. Some funerary stelae even bear figurative representations of these servants, who keep their master or their mistress company.²² Even when their servile condition is not explicitly indicated, they were almost certainly slaves (or sometimes former slaves), as free servants were very rare. They are often represented as smaller than their master or mistress, so that the eye of the viewer rests on the most important character. Sometimes certain features of the servant or certain characteristics of his clothing make it possible to determine which people he came from: a black person, for instance, or a Goth, in the case of Silistra's sepulcher, in the fourth century CE.

These were probably the servants of mid-level notables, members of the municipal elites, with whom we are the least familiar. Nonetheless, sites like Pompeii as well as certain literary texts give us some idea: in Apuleius's *Meta-morphoses*, a municipal notable (*vir principalis*) owned, among other urban slaves, a cook (with his wife and son), a mule-driver, a manservant, a doctor, not to mention at least half-a-dozen servants whose function is not indicated (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 8.30–31 and 9.1–2).

House Slaves, Slaves of Slaves, and Sex Slavery

How many servants were there in the Roman Empire, and particularly in Italy? By way of comparison, in France, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were between 900,000 and one million personal servants, men as well as women, “maids” included (but, of course, not counting sales assistants in shops and salaried workers on agricultural properties). About 200,000 of these servants worked in Paris. In 1911, the total population of France was 39,600,000 inhabitants. Thus servants represented, at the time, 2.5 percent of the entire population.²³ Female domestics were certainly more numerous at the beginning of the twentieth century than in antique Rome. The job, which was already largely feminized around 1850, became increasingly so in the second half of the nineteenth century: whereas in 1851, two-thirds of servants were women, in 1901 that figure rose to 80 percent. In the Roman world, on the contrary, the majority of servants were men, at least in the elite families.

It is impossible to know if there were more servants in France of the 1900s than in Rome at the end of the Republic and under the Principate. The rural population was much larger in Antiquity, which probably means that there were fewer personal servants. In 1911, France was about 55 percent rural and 44 percent urban; the percentage of city dwellers was much smaller in Antiquity. But those who had the means to buy and support a male or female slave were probably more numerous than those who had a maid in 1900. Especially since, in the homes of freed slaves and plebeians, the female slave also played the role of lover or of quasi wife. We must also take into account the fact that some of the servants were freedmen or freedwomen, and not slaves, while those who were born free constituted a small minority.

At the beginning of the first century CE, servants who were slaves or freedmen probably represented about 3 percent of the entire population. If the population of the Empire stood at about 60 million inhabitants, then there would have been some 1.5 million servants, or even somewhat more. But these are only assumptions. These servants were not equally distributed across the various regions of the Empire. They were much more concentrated in a city like Rome than in the countryside or in a small town. At that time, because of the presence of senators and knights, their numbers were certainly greater in Italy than in the provinces. Moreover, a reinforcement of social distance and an evolution of the lifestyle of the elites—increasingly sumptuous and refined up to the end of the Julio-Claudian era—contributed to an increase in the number of these servants between the third century BCE and the first century CE. For the remainder of the Principate, it

seems impossible to draw conclusions regarding the evolution of this number.

Among urban slaves, a distinction was made, as in classical Greece, between bought slaves and slaves born in the master's house (the *vernae*). The latter were more highly valued, probably because it was easier to train them—at least if one so wished—and because they had more personal ties to the household. The master or mistress might feel a special tenderness for the *verna* that sometimes went hand-in-hand with sexual relations, but also corresponded to a paternal or maternal sentiment. It could happen that the master offered a funerary epitaph for a *verna*, especially if the slave died young: the little slave Callista, dead at the age of four in Barcelona, toward the end of the second century CE, was entitled to a tomb thanks to her master, Cornelius Thallion.²⁴ Obviously, in such cases, one wonders if the master was not also the father of the child, whom he would have had by a slave. If the inscription does not make this clear, one is left to assume it.

A considerable number of these household slaves had a *peculium*, but it is impossible to determine the amount. Some had a large one, others a small one. Among the treasurers (*dispensatores*), for instance, we know that there were very prosperous men. Certain slaves had the privilege of possessing other slaves as part of their *peculium*. These slaves of slaves were often called *vicarii*, that is, substitutes.²⁵ They were probably not numerous. Like the rest of the *peculium*, they were the legal property of the slaveholder, but it was the slave with a *peculium* who managed them and benefitted from them. Those who possessed *vicarii* were themselves called *ordinarii* (the “ordinary,” the holders); they were mainly privileged, managerial slaves—treasurers (*dispensatores*) or managers (*vilici*), but not exclusively.²⁶ Usually an “ordinary” slave had only one or two *vicarii*. But a slave of the Emperor Tiberius, Musicus Scurranus, had sixteen!²⁷

Initially, as his name indicates, the *vicarius* was a substitute for the slave who controlled him, and he worked in the service of the master; this was the case in the comedies of Plautus. But subsequently the slaves of slaves were part of the *peculium* of the ordinary slave and were often entirely at his personal service.²⁸ Thus there are three cases: slaves of the master who are a substitute for the ordinary slave; slaves who are part of a *peculium* and are a substitute for the ordinary slave; slaves who are part of the *peculium* and are at the service of the ordinary slave. It is often difficult to distinguish which of the three cases we are dealing with. Women and children who are substitutes appear always to be at the service of the ordinary slave. Likewise, when an ordinary slave, like the aforementioned Musicus, possesses an entire group of substitutes, they are at his service, and do not replace

him in his functions.²⁹ The substitutes who are at the personal service of the ordinary slave are servants, or they manage his *peculium*.

In their master's house, slaves—particularly women, but men as well—were the perfect sexual prey. Authors like Cicero, Seneca, or Pliny the Younger never evoke the sexual relations they could have with slaves; but certain texts suggest that such relations were very common. The death of the senator Larcus Macedo, who, in about 100 CE, was murdered by his slaves in his private *thermae*, deeply distressed his slave concubines, even though they were in no way involved in his murder; Pliny the Younger, who reports the facts, is clearly neither astonished nor shocked by the existence of this real harem surrounding the senator (Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 3.14). Free men were obviously the principal beneficiaries of these sexual bargains. But in certain much rarer cases, women also benefitted from them. The freedman Trimalchio explains that his manumission was due in part to the fact that he treated his master indulgently, but his mistress as well (Petronius, *Satyricon*, 75).

In spite of these love affairs between slaves and free people, and although slaves did not have the right to marry, there did exist, within the *familiae* of servants of the elite households, real slave families. The study of funerary inscriptions shows that these unions often involved slaves belonging to the same master, although not always. It has been estimated that about a third of such unions joined together slaves belonging to different masters, be these masters private individuals or the emperor himself. But only certain slaves of the emperor managed to marry a free woman. We also find that in the urban *familiae* there were friendships and associations that afforded slaves the opportunity to gather and organize parties.³⁰ Of course, all of this depended on the master: these were acts of tolerance that he could reconsider any time.

The Slave's Legal Status in the City

Since the slave's existence seems to be founded entirely on the household, it might seem surprising that the law reserved a place for him in the city. But the facts are not so simple: the slave, we have seen, did not have a fully recognized place in the family, and, conversely, he was not absent from the city. How did the city give slaves a legally defined place? Did it establish slavery as a status?

In Greece, most of what constituted justice for a slave was carried out in a private setting.³¹ It was subject to the discretion of the master, whose decisions were not always easy to make, for the slave

was a “difficult possession” (Plato, *Laws*, 6.777b). How does one deal with a lazy slave, wonders Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, 2.1.15–17)? He must not be treated too harshly, which usually means: do not beat him, deprive him of food, chain him up in a prison or a mill. For poor treatment would drive him to leave, whence the limited effectiveness of chains (Xenophon, *Economics*, 3.4). Punishment is necessary, but it must be meted out properly (Plato, *Laws*, 6.777e). Some historians have been of the opinion that slaves were less severely punished in Ancient society than in modern societies such as the United States, where agricultural labor was more market-oriented and therefore more demanding.³² But it is difficult to make comparisons of this sort.

Branding was the result of misdeeds that were considered serious, particularly flight—“arrest me, I am a runaway” says a scholium to Aeschines (*On the False Embassy*, 2.83). Sometimes it also took place on a whim of the master.³³ Although this repression was private, one gets the impression that it has a meaning for the whole community. This is why the slave’s place in theater comprised a public spectacle and a legitimization of this private repression. The house was the slave’s space; but things did not end there. Civic public space also played a role.

The slave is first defined by that which is forbidden: prohibitive laws. Slaves were not allowed to enter the citizens’ assembly (*ecclēsia*), or the theater, or the gymnasium; “a slave can neither exercise nor rub himself with oil in the palaestrae,” says one of Solon’s laws. He was forbidden to adopt behavior similar to that of a free man: “A slave shall not be the lover of a free boy [...], or else he shall receive fifty blows of the public lash.”³⁴ Nor may he bear certain names, such as those of the tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton. If the slave had a right to refuge, it was only within limited spaces; in Athens he was forbidden, for instance, to take refuge in the temples of the Acropolis. The slave was, then, primarily constructed as a non-free being; in Athens, that construct dates back to the beginning of the development of slavery, in Solon’s time.

From a legal perspective, the slave is a nonentity, without rights under the law. No slave may prosecute or be prosecuted. A perpetual minor under the authority of the *kyrios*, he does not have the support of any social group: in a defense by Demosthenes, a litigant may not intervene in favor of one of his former slaves. From a legal point of view, under no circumstances can a slave be held responsible. Even if he takes an active part in disputes and lawsuits, he never appears to be responsible (Demosthenes, 36.8 and 47.59).

Nor do slaves have the right to testify, unlike free men. Under both Greek and Roman law, a slave’s word can only be accepted if it has

been extracted under physical torture. Nobody can torture a slave without the consent of his master. In a Greek trial, it is not the master himself but his adversary who proposes torture, and the master can refuse. The proceedings are public, with an agreement reached between the two parties (Demosthenes, 59.124), except under unusual circumstances, such as trials relating to political matters; thus, in 414 BCE, in the Hermocopidai affair, Athens used torture without seeking the masters' authorization. The meaning of this institution is debated: some historians see it as a legal fiction, others a relic of the past, still others a real action.³⁵ This last interpretation is by far the most convincing. Torture is an alternative to legal testimony, but we do have to imagine that it existed and that it was considered logical. For slaves know things, and they are not allowed to testify. The Athenians do not hesitate to strike a slave, and they think that by so doing it is possible to arrive at the truth, even if it had no legal standing: if the slave's interest is to enjoy the well-being of his body (Demosthenes, 40.41 and 49.56), torture can lead him to tell the truth.

In Greece, punishment was generally meted out with a whip. Why the whip? It is of course—and as some have pointed out—a substitute for a fine, since slaves may not own property. But it is also more. For we find, in the fourth century, independent slaves, slaves “living on their own” (*chôris oikountēs*), who earned a living; and yet, whatever their degree of financial independence, the law makes no exceptions: the punishment was always a whipping. Even public slaves, the most privileged, were punished by flogging. Herodotus's mythical example of the Scythians, who recall the meaning of their condition when they catch sight of whips, evokes well the debased and fearful nature that the ancients attributed to the slave (Herodotus, 4. 1–4). This servile dread of corporal punishment was cause for much laughter in Athenian comedy, even if Aristophanes restrained himself in comparison with his competitors (*Peace*, 742–49). He did not hesitate to present the slave being tortured, and tortured in all manners: “Tie him to a ladder, hang him, flog him with spikes, flay him, twist him, pour vinegar up his nose, pile up loads of bricks ...”³⁶ Torture is, of course, also ideological; slavery is a category that is culturally constructed by the theater and the law; violence perpetrated against slaves is public. The flogging is administered in public, at the marketplace—where one finds the *mastigonomoi*, the “whip-wielding officials”—and it is a spectacle. The ideology of the body, and of the nude body, relates to the free person, for instance at games. We have seen that from the beginning slaves were excluded from the palaestra by Solon. The law thus reinforced the “absolute distinction” between slaves and citizens, whom the palaestra prepares for war and games.³⁷ Social cohesion and hierarchy are the stronger for it.

Are there, nevertheless, indications of a certain legal autonomy of the slave? It is very difficult to say for sure, even when the slave appears to act on his own initiative. Is personal managerial autonomy possible, with specific legal consequences? If a slave acts on his own initiative, without instructions from his master, he can be prosecuted (like Callarus in Demosthenes, 55), but in his master's name. Autonomy is greater in legal proceedings involving maritime traders, which were instituted in Athens in the middle of the fourth century; the notorious *dikaī emporikaī*. The slave Lampis, who was a shipmaster, intervened in such a case (Demosthenes, 34). More generally speaking and as we have already observed, autonomy is also greater for the *chôris oikountēs*, as demonstrated in Hyperides' *Against Athenogenes*, in the matter of Midas's debt. But even there, the master was responsible, according to an ancient law of Solon which is cited by Hyperides and always applied: "any offences or crimes committed by a slave shall be the responsibility of the master who owns him at the time."³⁸

Those measures that were the most favorable to slaves are always explained by the need to protect the citizenry, not by a wish to assert a prerogative. Thus the ban on slave testimony allows for one exception: the denunciation of crimes and religious sacrilege.³⁹ It is also in order to defend the dominant city that denunciations by slaves are authorized in conquered cities—for instance on Keos in the fourth century. These are the only known cases in which the word of a slave was accepted in the political realm.

Through the same lens, slaves may sometimes benefit from measures of legal protection. Let us recall the pamphlet of Pseudo-Xenophon: "Now among the slaves [...] at Athens there is the greatest uncontrolled wantonness; you can't hit them there, and a slave will not stand aside for you."⁴⁰ In reality, these legal actions for damages (*dikē blabēs*) constitute an aspect of the defense of the free person's property. The slave is normally included in that property. Furthermore, the *graphē hybreōs*, the law on insults, states that "if anyone outrages a child [...] or a man or woman, or any one, free or slave, [...] the law provides prosecution for outrage"⁴¹ This law managed to astonish more than one historian, and indeed sometimes the Athenians themselves. It seems to reinforce a thesis according to which the ancients acknowledged the slaves' humanity. But it does not target slaves in particular; they are just an extension of a larger action that encourages citizens to invoke the law in order to protect themselves, to protect their rank and honor. And it is regarded as protection of the weakest citizens, a compensation for the statutory hierarchy.

Privileged slaves, among whom public slaves are generally ranked first, do not benefit from a substantially different legal circumstance. The privileges they enjoy in comparison with other slaves exist within the framework of a contract with the city: they receive a salary and may belong to the city administration, they are entitled to possessions. The slave of a public slave (*dēmosios*), or his recently freed slave, is mentioned in a manumission inscription (*IG II/ III*², 1570. 78–79). We sometimes observe that they have considerable freedom of action. A certain Pittalacos, whom we know from a speech by Aeschines, frequented gambling houses in Athens and raised quail and roosters like rich people (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.54). But the city can break this contract at any time, since it does so even for resident aliens, the metics, who are not protected from a return to slavery if they have not fulfilled their obligations—for instance if they have not nominated a citizen sponsor (a requirement for being welcomed into the city), or if they have not paid the tax required of them, the *mētoikion*—and the metics too can be punished by flogging.

Roman law conforms to the same general principles as that of the Greek city. In both cases the application of these principles is mitigated by circumstances of everyday life. Yet often enough the adjustments are not the same in the two places.

In Rome as in Greece, a slave participating in a trial can be neither an accuser nor a defendant. And for his testimony to be admissible, it can only be extracted under torture. In principle, Roman citizens were not supposed to be tortured, but we know that under certain emperors they were. With respect to free men and women who were not Roman citizens, there was no officially formulated ban.⁴² It is not easy to know precisely which cases required the testimony of a slave. Probably when his own action was involved, or his *peculium*, or when he was included in an estate. Clearly, the Ancients believed that slaves could only tell the truth under torture. But, at the same time, they were aware that disclosures made under torture could be false. Even the slave who himself admits to having done something should not necessarily be taken at his word.⁴³ In addition, there was a whole series of measures relating to the ties that could exist between the tortured slave and the person about whom he had to testify. For instance, the testimony of a slave could be favorable to his master, but according to the rules he was never used as a witness against his master.⁴⁴

Slaves received all sorts of punishments: their masters could reprimand them, withdraw advantages, downgrade them to lower levels of the slave hierarchy, send them from the city to the countryside, force more trying tasks on them, have them whipped or

caned, chain them up or imprison them, and even have them killed. When they were killed, it was usually by crucifixion. Torture aimed at getting information from them was not a punishment. It also happened, nonetheless, that the slave was struck or tortured before being crucified; in that case torture was part of the punishment.⁴⁵

While the master had the power to punish the slave, submit him to torture, and have him killed, there were nevertheless forms to be respected. It was not justifiable for the master to kill a slave surreptitiously and make him disappear in secret. That surely happened, but it was not normal practice. If the master wanted to have one of his slaves executed, he had to make his family and some of his friends partners in the punishment, and the execution had to be carried out in public, particularly in front of the other slaves, as an example. Plutarch explains how Cato the Elder organized domestic trials to judge his slaves and punish them (Plutarch, *Cato the Elder*, 21.4).⁴⁶

We know about the practice of corporal punishment and torture through an inscription from Pozzuoli, the *lex Libitinae Puteolana*, which deals with the adjudication of funeral services and of corporal punishment in the city of Pozzuoli.⁴⁷ When the torture of a slave was intentional and decided on by his master, or when the master wanted to kill one of his slaves whom he believed to be seriously guilty, he addressed himself directly to an adjudicator, without the intervention of the city magistrates; for a fee, the adjudicator had to supply qualified executioners (*carnifices*) and workers, in order to perform the service requested. This same adjudicator also administered punishments ordered in a public capacity by one of the two magistrates of the city (*duumvirs* or *duovirs*); the latter could not inflict the death penalty on free men or women, but had the power to have slaves executed by crucifixion.

A speech by Cicero in 66 BCE, *Pro Cluentio*, evokes two scenes of torture, which date from a few years earlier. The husband of a certain Sassia—a dis-reputable woman according to the orator—is dead. In order to know if he was assassinated, she has three slaves tortured. She gathers together several friends and relatives to have them participate in this ceremony. A first session produces no results and she decides to start again. Cicero insists on the violence of the torture (without describing it), and on the spectators' uneasiness. According to Cicero, Sassia's goal was not to know the truth, but to extract from the slaves an accusation against her own son, Oppianicus, whom she sought to have condemned. But finally one of the witnesses protested and explained to the others what he believed to be Sassia's true objective. The operation failed, she did not get what she wanted (*Pro Cluentio* 175–278).

Religion, Politics, Public Services: A Game of Inclusion and Exclusion

What was the slave's role in the most collective and "civic" activities of the city-state and of the Empire: religion, war, public services, and politics? These are areas from which slaves were by definition excluded but in which they nonetheless had a role. Most of the time that role was in the margins, between the lines; indicative of the complicated interplay between inclusion and exclusion, it tended to increase in exceptional situations, when slaves displayed their efficiency and loyalty. It depended not on the law but on the bond of trust that was or was not established in daily life. The slave's role was not necessarily the same in religion, politics, war, and public services, and it was not the same in the Greek cities, in the Republican city of Rome, and under the Empire. Of the four areas mentioned, it is, we think, in public services that the slave's role was the most important, for public slaves of the Greek cities and some slaves of the Roman emperor were official or quasi-official employees of the public service sector. Then comes war, which we deal with subsequently, and in which, principles notwithstanding, the slave's presence was very visible.

In Greece as in Rome, religion constituted a kind of transition between the official life of the city and the private sphere, under the authority of which the slave fell (as he belonged to an owner and a household). For slaves, religion was generally not public; at the same time it usually offered the possibility of assimilating them by making them share their masters' beliefs or rites. In Greece, the only spontaneous religious demonstration by slaves was their participation in foreign cults, they who were foreigners. We see this clearly at certain workplaces and in certain settlements where they were numerous: in the silver mines of Laurium the Phrygian divinities were honored, in accordance with the slaves' ethnic origins, as if this were the only thing that bound them to their native traditions.

Apart from that, their relation to cults depended on the will of the city and the masters. It does happen, though, that the Greek city endeavors to have a policy of enhancing the status of cults, for instance by instituting slave holidays, in particular at Magnesia on the Maeander, with the festival of Artemis Leucophryne, or at Lampsacus. As for the participation of slaves in household cults, like the cult of Zeus Ktesios, it was customary, but the slave's role was hardly ever described in detail. Neither Xenophon nor Theophrastus refers to it (see Theophrastus, *Characters*, 22.4). If Pseudo-Aristotle insists on the

fact that these cults must include slaves, it is precisely because the slaves' attachment to the family is not as natural as one might think, or because their foreign origins are problematic. Such household cults are an aspect of Hellenization, as well as a tactical approach to integrating the slave and averting flight. There are also some specific festivals such as the *Cronia*, which in this form are only known in Athens (Philocharos, *FgrH*, 328, frag. 97). This festival has almost no religious elements, and nothing is known about the way in which slaves participated in worship on that day; only the master's role is known.⁴⁸ For all the other *Cronia* that we find in Greece, the role of slaves is not emphasized.

Every Roman, male and female, has a *genius*, a spirit (which from a certain period on is called *Juno* for women). This *genius* is the deified personification of the individual personality, of all of the person's qualities and faults. Slaves on the other hand do not have a *genius*. In Plautus's *The Captives*, Hegio mistakes the young Philocratus for a slave, whereas in fact he comes from a good family; Hegio does not speak to him of his *genius* until he discovers his true identity: "Philocratus, by your good Genius, I do entreat you."⁴⁹ Likewise in *The Persian*, the slave Toxilus, who usurps the role of his master, celebrates the latter's *genius* on his birthday (Plautus, *Persa*, or *the Persian*, 108). If slaves are not human beings, it is logical that they not have a *genius*. But, strangely, some communities (the cities) and even some places (the markets, for instance) are presumed to have *genii*, which are publicly celebrated. And then, if a slave has no *genius*, how can he acquire one on the day of his manumission?

In spite of this principle of exclusion, the Roman city requires slaves to fulfill certain religious duties. Despite the very high rank of the Vestal virgins, who came from the most important families and enjoyed exceptional privileges, if the slaves of these priestesses suspected that they had committed acts contrary to their vows of chastity, they were obliged to denounce them. Prestige notwithstanding, the Vestals' virtue was thus subject to the surveillance of their slaves; this control was a way of protecting the honor of the Vestals and therefore of the city.⁵⁰ As in the Greek city, this inordinate responsibility conferred on slaves is basically devised in the interest of the citizenry.

Nobody prevents the slave from having religious beliefs, if they do no harm to the public order. But his participation in group cults, and particularly in civic cults, is passive and very limited. Slaves belong to the home, to the *domus*; they are thus associated with the cults of the *domus*, and in particular with that of the Lares. However, even here, they themselves are not allowed to celebrate a sacred act. In the family as elsewhere, they attend religious ceremonies when they

receive permission—but without participating in them. Or some of them assist the religious celebrant and are charged with carrying out material tasks. While the roles of women, aliens, and children are already limited in the religious domain, that of slaves is more modest still, even if they are not totally excluded.⁵¹

In politics, slaves obviously do not exercise institutional functions. But in both Greece and Rome, they play a political role through the help they can provide to their master or his supporters. In Rome, at the end of the Republic, it was customary that certain slaves accompany their master when he walked in the city, for instance during electoral campaigns; one such slave, the *nomenclator*, gave him the names and positions of all those whom he passed and had to greet. Some, following the example of Cato of Utica, criticized this practice; the electoral candidate, they thought, should recognize his constituents himself, without any help.⁵²

The role of slaves in politics tends to manifest itself in situations of unrest or civil war, but then they end up running the same risks as their masters. There are numerous political and military anecdotes relating to the civil wars of the first century BCE. Some senators who were important slaveholders used their dependents as personal guards, to defend themselves or to attack the enemy. When, in 87 BCE, Marius landed in Tuscany with his companions in exile, five hundred of their slaves came from Rome (spontaneously?) to assist them (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.8.67 and Plutarch, *Marius*, 41.2). In 63 BCE, when Rome was shaken by the Catilinarian conspiracy and two Catilinarian leaders were arrested, their slaves and freedmen tried in vain to free them by force: “The slaves and freedmen of Lentulus and Cethegus, reinforced by numerous artisans, made a circuit by back streets and assaulted the households of the praetors in order to rescue their masters.”⁵³

Sometimes, furthermore, the protagonists of the civil war tried to rouse the slaves of their enemies, or even all the slaves. According to Appian, for instance, in order to defend themselves against the senate, Caius Grachus and Fulvius Flaccus “ran through the city offering freedom to the slaves, but none listened to them” (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.3.26). Likewise, when Sylla seized Rome in 88 BCE, and there were combats on the Esquiline, Marius and his partisans “proclaimed freedom to slaves who would share their labors”; but nobody came forward. Because they had “incited slaves to insurrection,” Marius, the tribune Sulpicius, and several other highly placed individuals were declared enemies of the Roman people (1.7.58–60).

Soon after, in 87–86 BCE, the slaves that Cinna had previously manumitted became uncontrollable and Cinna found himself forced to

kill them.

The slaves who had joined Cinna in answer to his proclamation and had thereupon been freed and were at this time enrolled in the army by Cinna himself, broke into and plundered households, and killed persons whom they met on the street. Some of them attacked their own masters particularly. After Cinna had forbidden this several times, but to no avail, he surrounded them with his Gallic soldiery one night while they were taking their rest, and killed them all. Thus did the slaves receive fit punishment for their repeated treachery to their masters. (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.8.74)

In the heat of the political struggles of these very troubled times, the Senate itself sometimes called upon the slaves. Thus, in 88 BCE, when the praetor Asellio was assassinated because he had dared to clash with money-lenders, "The Senate offered a reward of money to any free person, and freedom to any slave, and impunity to any accomplice, who should give testimony leading to the conviction of the murderers." But the money-lenders saw to it that all testimonies were prevented (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.6.54).

When the master is in danger, some slaves betray him, but others, who have been living in his immediate entourage and have a relationship of trust with him, refuse to abandon him and seek help. At the time of his death in 121 BCE, Caius Sempronius Gracchus was accompanied by only one of his slaves, to whom he gave the order to kill him; the slave obeyed (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.3.26). Senator Velleius Paterculus believes that the sons of outlaws generally show no loyalty to their fathers, whereas their wives, on the contrary, remain very faithful, as do some of their slaves (Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, 2.67.2). It is thanks to his slaves that another senator, C. Caecilius Cornutus, escaped death, when Marius and his partisans had taken back Rome in 87 BCE.

Cornutus concealed himself in a hut and was saved by his slaves in an ingenious way. They found a dead body and placed it on a funeral pyre, and when the searchers came they set

fire to it and said that they were burning the body of their master, who had hanged himself. In this way he was saved by his slaves.⁵⁴

Two groups of slaves played a significant administrative and managerial role: public slaves of the cities and, from the beginning of the Empire on, slaves of the emperor and of those close to him.

Various Greek cities resorted to public slaves (*dēmosioi*, *oikētai*, *dēmosioi hyperētai*), but it is in Athens that they were the most common.⁵⁵ They were not all given the same tasks; some carried out road works, others fulfilled police functions or kept the books, records, accounts. They could also be attached to temples and were then “sacred slaves”—*hiērodouloi*. The sanctuary of Aphrodite in Corinth was so rich, writes Strabo, “that it had more than a thousand *hiērodouloi* and courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated as offerings to the goddess.”⁵⁶ Rediscovered documents regularly supply historians with new information: according to an Athenian epigraph from 375 BCE, slaves were charged with verifying the quality of monies used at the marketplace.⁵⁷

The city of Rome also had public slaves, as did the other Italian cities and the rest of the Roman Empire. One or another of these slaves was the city’s *actor*, that is, the agent authorized to represent it in the processing of legal documents. For instance, Pompey has left the name of two public slaves who, in the first century CE, collected in the name of the city the proceeds from municipal taxes that were rented to adjudicators; the slaves were Secundus (later manumitted under the name of M. Venerius Secundus) and Privatus.⁵⁸ Other slaves helped priests in charge of celebrating the official cults; or were assistants to magistrates; or tended to the functioning of certain public services. From Frontinus’s treatise *The Aqueducts of Rome* we know that in Rome the *familia aquaria*—that is to say all slaves who were appointed to the water-works—was made up of two hundred and forty public slaves, and, starting with the reign of Claudius, imperial slaves as well.⁵⁹

Because they served a community and received a salary, these public slaves undoubtedly led a more autonomous life than the slaves of individuals, and they were less despised. Some of them had freeborn citizens as partners, although with respect to marriage they had no legal advantage over other slaves. Those who belonged to the city of Rome were more easily manumitted than those belonging to individuals: their full emancipation required only a decision to that effect by the Senate and a corresponding declaration issued by a

magistrate.⁶⁰

Since their place in the organization chart of public jobs was defined by the city, and their public usefulness was officially recognized, their status was not limited to the set of norms regulating the property of their master and the transmission of that property; in a way, that status became positive.

From the beginning of the reign of Augustus, imperial slaves and freedmen found themselves in a similar situation.⁶¹ Although they were the servants of an individual, the emperor, they quite rapidly came to play a very important role in the government and the administration of the Empire. However, not all imperial slaves were in the administration: in addition to the domestics appointed to the personal service of the emperor, many worked in the mines or on the emperor's estates; their fate would not have been more enviable than that of farm slaves of private landowners or of the miners of mine owners.

In principle, imperial slaves belonged to a private person—the emperor or someone close to him; although their administrative role was officially less recognized than that of public slaves, it was no less obvious. Some senators viewed it very unfavorably: this hierarchy of employees, who today would be called civil servants, was the sign that Rome had moved from a Republican oligarchy, dear to the senators, to a monarchy. The administrative role of imperial slaves, which was still very modest under Augustus and his immediate successors, Tiberius and Caligula, subsequently developed considerably and survived until about the middle of the third century CE. After that period, if there were still imperial slaves and freedmen, they were no longer employed in the administration. The presence of dependents of the emperor in the administration is thus characteristic of the high Roman Empire, of the regime called the Principate.⁶²

In this hierarchy, it is the freedmen who dominate, while the majority of slaves remain simple agents. The careers of the freedmen are therefore better known and studied. It is true that once manumitted, the imperial slaves often continued to work in the same services and could take advantage of promotions.

Among the administrative entities we find the Palatine bureaus, kinds of ministerial departments very close to the emperor and charged with the high-level management of the Empire. Each of these departments was run by a high-ranking civil servant, an imperial freedman (or, later on, a knight), and had slaves among its personnel.⁶³ By way of example, let us look briefly at two public services: Gallic customs and the *annona*. Gallic customs (or “the fortieth of the Gauls,” in reference

to the levy rate) was recently the subject of a very exhaustive and accurate study.⁶⁴ The Roman Empire had internal customs, between provinces or groups of provinces. In the first and second centuries of our era, Gallic customs was leased to a group of bidders, but there was also a staff of freedmen and imperial slaves. It comprised a number of stations, particularly in the Alps and the Pyrenees, each of which was supervised by an imperial slave, the *vilicus* (the steward, superintendant); from inscriptions we know, for instance, the names of the *vilici* Aproniatus and Amaranthus, who lived toward the end of the second century CE.⁶⁵ At each station there were other slaves, some belonging to the group of bidders or to its associates, others to the emperor; but the number of these slaves is not known. There were also *circitores*, probably itinerant employees in charge of controlling the merchandise. Finally, in Rome, the administrative headquarters of customs employed an equally unknown number of slaves.

Another public service, the *annona*, supervised grain supplies to Rome. It was concentrated primarily in three cities, Rome, Ostia, and Pozzuoli, where it had, among other staff, secretaries and transcribers as well as treasurers, *vicarii* of these treasurers and cashiers—all imperial slaves. It also had storehouses, supervised by superintendent slaves, the *vilici*. Other imperial slaves or freed-men worked there: caretakers of the storehouses (*horrearius*), to whom all the keys were entrusted, and guards (*custodies*). These guards in turn had, under their orders, more modest guards, each of whom was responsible for the oversight of one location. Then there were packers, porters ... Unfortunately it is impossible to estimate the number of slaves working in these services.⁶⁶

While some of them received training at the imperial palace, many were trained on the job, during their years of work in the public services. They thus acquired skills that were inaccessible to many free men, given the existing system of education in the Roman world. This was not their only advantage. They enjoyed real material security and, if they did their work properly, were assured of keeping the same master and the same job until their possible manumission. It is, of course, the freedmen of the emperor who acquired social prestige and sometimes wealth: they were held in much higher regard than freedmen of individuals and were, on average, more prosperous. But the chances of manumission seem to have been quite good in the public services. On the other hand, this was not a milieu open to women. Similarly, there were very few female public slaves. The participation of slaves in public services contributed in yet another way to reinforcing the divisions between male and female slaves.

Slaves and War

Did slaves play a role in the army and in war? To be sure, as Heraclitus said, “war turns some into slaves and others into free men.” But if we focus now not on enslavement but on the status and condition of the slave, war, which is primarily meant to be an activity of the city, closely linked to the political order, is foreign to the slave—as dictated by his place in civil society. Under the weight of constraints and circumstances, however, “war time” can also disrupt customary social rules and offer opportunities to slaves.

In no Greek city was there a known law that forbids slaves to join the army. In fact, such a law serves no purpose: the army of the city is by definition open only to citizens and, under certain circumstances, to aliens residing in the city, as well as to potential mercenaries, free men recruited by the city. Slaves are forbidden to usurp the status of free men and the offense is seriously punished. One cannot find ranks of slaves next to those of free men.

In the third century CE, the jurisconsult Marcianus declared the same general principle for Rome: the armed services are entirely closed to slaves; if they violate this prohibition, they are sentenced to death (*Digest*, 49.16.11, Marcianus). But this prohibition was not always in force. Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus evoke episodes in the archaic period during which slaves fought alongside their masters and their masters’ other dependents. There is a reason for this: in archaic Rome, patricians did battle accompanied by their relatives and all their dependents, clients, freedmen, and slaves. They went to war with their entire lineage and household. The city existed, but not all combatants were citizens. Beginning at the end of the fifth or the start of the fourth century BCE, however, slaves were no longer allowed to fight. Even if not all citizens were soldiers—the poorest, in those days, were not mobilized—the combatant service was henceforth reserved for free men.

And if a slave managed, through fraud, to work his way into the army in order to escape his condition and pass himself off as a soldier, he could be punished with death. Pliny the Younger, who was governor of the province of Bithynia between 111 and 113 CE, presented a case of this type to the Emperor Trajan (*Letters*, 10.29 and 30). The response of the latter was meant to be formal: if the slave works his way into the army with full knowledge of the facts and without pointing out his social position, he must be executed. In certain cases, however, it was the recruitment services or the slave owner who were at fault, and not the slave himself. In any case, it was impossible for the latter to remain a soldier.

But the reality of war was not limited to combat. The citizen who went off to war was also a master, who lived as such and whose way of life did not change, or changed very little. Thus, in Rome as in Greece, slaves accompanied their masters to war and continued their work there.

Their presence was not clandestine; on the contrary: the first known example of pay, in 432 for the siege at Potidaea, provided one drachma a day for the Athenian hoplite—or infantryman—and one drachma for his servant (*hupērētes*) (Thucydides, 3.17), who was usually a slave. In the army, slaves were servants, “accompaniers,” “followers”—*hypērēstai*, *paides*, *thērapontēs*, or *akolouthoi*. They carried the provisions, picked up the wounded and served as weapons valets and horse grooms; or they protected the baggage if they were armed (which some seem to have been). They were *skeuophoroi*: they set up the tents and prepared the food, grinding grains in particular. Their numbers could be considerable; Philip of Macedonia wanted to reduce to the strict minimum the number of followers—namely, one for every ten infantrymen or one apiece for each cavalryman (Frontinus, *Stratagems*, 4.1.6).

In the Greek world, the army did not assume a truly military appearance until the time of combat. Before the Battle of Delium in 424, “the number of men who had set out on the original expedition was much greater than the enemy army, and many had gone along without heavy armor because there had been a general mobilization of whatever citizens and aliens were available; but these men had already started for home and only a few were left [at the time of combat].”⁶⁷

Even in the master’s absence, the slave could be in the service of the army, in the same way he was in the service of the city when he participated in public works. He then became a resource for his owner, who was paid a salary. This explains an organization introduced by Antimenes of Rhodes in 324 BCE, probably at the time of a massive recruitment. It established the first insurance system for owners: “he invited all the slave owners who so wished to have the slave’s value registered at the rate they wanted, on the condition that they meet the costs of an annual fee of eight drachmas: in the event that the slave escaped, they would be reimbursed the value that was in the register” (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Economics*, 2.2.34b). Were there many such slaves? Probably, although it is difficult to say for sure. Even if the Greeks set their armies against the Persian armies, which were accompanied in all their movements by the court and the administration, and included masses of servants, probably slaves were common to them as well.

In Rome as well, slaves were present in and around the military camps, although they were not soldiers. Some were in the service of the legion, and fulfilled administrative or technical functions: we find slaves who were treasurers of the legions, as well as slave mule-drivers. Others were charged with the maintenance of helmets. Still others were domestics in the service of officers or of simple legionnaires. Texts and inscriptions attest that many simple soldiers owned a slave. Centurions probably owned several, whereas certain Roman generals, Sulla or Lucullus in particular, maintained large staffs of servants in the army. In 67 BCE, Cato the Younger, the future Cato of Utica, left for Macedon as a military tribune; he brought with him fifteen slaves and two freedmen (Plutarch, *Cato the Younger*, 15). Plutarch also reminds us that, at the beginning of his career, at the very end of the third century BCE, the other Cato, Cato the Censor, was followed by only one supply-laden slave, and carried his weapons himself. Later on he became very demanding and imperious, but in his youth he was careful to treat his servants well. According to Plutarch, “a single attendant followed in charge of his camp utensils. With this man, it is said, he was never wroth, and never scolded him when he served up a meal, nay, he actually took hold himself and assisted in most of such preparations.”⁶⁸ But already in his time, Cato’s sobriety seemed unusual, and it stands in stark contrast to the ways of life that took hold subsequently. This is why other generals tried to react against these habits, which they considered to be a sign of weakness and contrary to military effectiveness: in 109 BCE, during the Jugurthine War, Metellus forbade his soldiers to be accompanied by slaves and beasts of burden, either in the camp or on marches.

Generally speaking, directors of historical epic films have not realized that the Roman army was not limited to strictly organized rows of soldiers, but that the combatants were accompanied by masses of slaves, domestics, or employees. Even if these slaves were not taken onto the battlefield, they had to escort the army when it moved. To be sure, their presence facilitated the lives of the soldiers and the officers: it freed them from subsidiary tasks and allowed them to maintain the lifestyle to which they were accustomed. On the other hand, it slowed down and complicated the functioning of the army. In dangerous situations, slaves could cause panic. This happened at least once, during the Gallic Wars: frightened by the arrival of the enemy, they threw themselves into the midst of the soldiers to protect themselves, and thus sowed confusion in the ranks (Caesar, *The Gallic Wars*, 6, 40, 1). Sometimes, in order to avoid such panics, the general forced the slaves to line up in military fashion. This is how Vegetius, author of a military treatise, explains the fact that they were sometimes divided into squadrons of one or two hundred men—squadrons that were

nonmilitary, but arranged in military style and commanded by slaves.

What was the slaves' role in the fighting? It is difficult to imagine them with their arms crossed. They were active participants, since some of them lost their lives in battle and, in Greece, their deaths were honored by the city. Pausanias writes: "It was surely a just decree, for a democracy, when the Athenians actually allowed slaves a public funeral, and to have their names inscribed on a slab, which declares that in the war they proved good men and true to their masters."⁶⁹ The most famous case is certainly the battle of Marathon, on the site of which was erected, next to the grave of the Athenians, another grave, "for the Boeotian Plataeans and for the slaves, for the slaves fought then for the first time by the side of their masters" (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.32.3). And yet tradition has it that no battle was more hoplitic—mobilizing citizens— than that of Marathon, and the *thētes* were probably not mobilized. What was the slaves' place in this battle? We do not know; probably on the flanks. How did they fight? Most likely in light troops, *hoploī*, armed with bows or projectiles, that intervened on the flanks of the soldiers. Probably enlisted in haste, the slaves accompanied their masters. In a way, combat represented a test of their attachment to their masters. Considering the finances of the Greek cities, war was always a trial, characterized more than we imagine by haste and constraints. Under these circumstances, the place of slaves should not be underestimated, although they did not play a real role in decisive battles.

This is even more obvious in maritime war, which mixes effort and participation in actual combat. Since the soldiers on board are wealthy, there are that many more slaves. Seeking to emphasize the hard times in which they live, Isocrates exclaims: "In those days, when they manned their triremes, they put on board crews of foreigners and slaves but sent out citizens to fight under heavy arms. Now, however, we use mercenaries as heavy-armed troops but compel citizens to row the ships."⁷⁰

The navy always presents exceptional cases, for it needs many men. It is here that recruitment is the most difficult, as Demosthenes pointed out in choosing the navy to emphasize the disorganization of the Athenian army: "in what pertains to war and its equipment, everything is ill-arranged, ill-managed, illdefined. Consequently we wait until we have heard some piece of good news, and then we appoint our ship-masters, and arrange suits for exchange of property, and go into committee of ways and means, and next we resolve that the fleet shall be manned by resident aliens and freedmen."⁷¹

Slaves, like aliens, are attracted by the large sums offered by the trierarchs (Thucydides, 7.13.2), who otherwise have difficulty filling

their ships, given the poor quality of recruitable rowers (Demosthenes, 50.7). The large fleet prepared by Alexander in 323 was organized by Micalus the Clazomenian, who “was dispatched to Phoenicia and Syria with 500 talents to enlist some men and to purchase others who were experienced in nautical affairs.”⁷² An Athenian epigraphic text from the end of the fifth century offers details about the crews of four ships. We learn that numerous slaves were taken on board, some of whom belonged to the wealthiest men, the deck officers, and others who were the slaves of simple oarsmen, in other words, of common people, be they citizens or metics. The slaves rowed next to their masters—for instance a certain Euphron, slave of Euphronios, and a certain Timagenes, slave of the alien Archedemos of Peparethos.⁷³ The prospect of being paid twice as much undoubtedly led the masters to make such choices.

In Rome as well, battle on land has to be distinguished from battle at sea. As a soldier declared to Marcus Antonius on the eve of the battle of Actium, it is on land that Roman citizens “are accustomed to stand and either conquer our enemies or die.”⁷⁴ The infantry and the cavalry are the branches in which citizens are at their best. Even if the Romans had to maintain a navy in order to assure peace and security in the Mediterranean, they did not accord the same prestige to the fleet as to the army. Most of the time, sailors of the naval fleets were not Roman citizens: they were usually “allies” (free men from regions that had been vanquished by Rome) or freedmen.

It seemed a little less inappropriate to enlist slaves in the naval fleet than in the land forces. Already during the First Punic War, slaves had been enlisted on battleships, and this happened again in 214 and 210. The practice amounted to a form of tax on slaveholders. The historian Theodore Mommsen strongly emphasized the role that slaves could play in the navy at the beginning of the Empire, not only as oarsmen but even as trierarchs, that is, as ship commanders. And, basing his judgment on some epigraphs of sailors that appear to name slaves of the emperor, he concluded that Augustus and Tiberius had enlisted the personnel of the naval fleet from among their own slaves. But Mommsen’s thesis is widely rejected, for instance by M. Redde, the current specialist on Roman naval war.⁷⁵ Indeed, some of the supposed slaves referred to in the inscriptions could have been pilgrims, or aliens, who were probably in the majority under Augustus, and who constituted the entire personnel of the fleet beginning with the reign of Claudius. Enlisting slaves was therefore not common in the navy either; Rome never renounced its basic principle—even when, from the reign of Augustus onward, it was permanently equipped with a professional army.

Exceptional circumstances did lead to the recruitment of slaves in

the army, however. During the Second Punic War, between 218 and 216 BCE, Rome underwent a series of major defeats by the Carthaginian general Hannibal, first near Ticinus, then at Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae. In the summer of 216 after the battle of Cannae, Rome's situation was particularly critical. It is then that the decision was made to recruit slave volunteers (who, for this reason, were called *volones*), by purchasing them from their masters. Although authors differ as to the numbers of these new recruits, there probably were eight thousand of them, the equivalent of two legions. Given the financial difficulties of the city, the masters were not paid immediately. Nor were the slaves manumitted immediately, but only two years later, in 214. They were made to take the oath "to serve with diligence and courage for as long as the Carthaginians were in Italy." Such an oath, if taken in 216, and not in 214 after their manumission, is very strange: what could the oath of a slave be worth? Some of them were even recruited to the cavalry, although this corps was particularly prestigious.

Their commander was Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, who was consul in 215. When Gracchus died in 212 and they fell under the command of the praetor Cnaeus Cornelius, they left the army, believing that they had been released from their oath; they had to be found and forced to return. Such behavior is logical coming from former slaves, who, even freed, had difficulty imagining ties other than those that bound them to their masters or former masters. Furthermore, throughout the years of military campaigns, they were almost always appointed to the least threatened branches. The Roman magistrates can therefore not be accused of having sought to send them to their deaths, far from it! Between 216 and 214, they never entered into contact with the enemy; they played the role of reserve forces. When in 214 the Roman magistrates saw fit to make them fight, the Senate passed a decree granting authority to make them participate in battles. They then were victorious near Benevento (and it is at this time that they were manumitted). This was not the only victory, but these former slaves, who had already been enlisted for a long time, continued to be looked on suspiciously, and they remained less exposed than freeborn Roman citizens. Over time, however, they probably became Roman soldiers like the others.

The Second Punic War was not the only case in which slaves were officially recruited for the defense of Rome and the Empire. At the end of his reign, Augustus also called upon slaves (whom he immediately manumitted), in order to deal with military problems at the German border—problems that were much less serious than those of the Second Punic War. These slaves were not volunteers; their mobilization represented a contribution that the emperor imposed on

their masters. The State, therefore, did not buy them. Such enlistments were obviously not very well received by the masters, as they drew on the farm slaves who cultivated their lands. In the second century CE, Marcus Aurelius also had to recruit slaves, to fill the voids in his armies caused by the plague. Although the military situation often proved to be far more critical in the third and fourth centuries CE, mobilizing slaves as soldiers did not become common practice; until the final decades of the fourth century CE, it was even considered contrary to Roman tradition. It is not until the early fifth century, shortly before the sack of Rome by Alaric, that the emperor had to resign himself to a mass conscription of slaves, for ground combat: on April 17, 406, he promised freedom and two gold coins to all slaves who were prepared to take up arms.

The slave is not supposed to be a soldier. But if, in particularly critical situations, he is asked to fight, then it is normal that he be granted freedom. Since he fights, he ceases naturally to be a slave—either immediately or after a certain period.

Domestic or employee slaves could be killed by the enemy even though they were not fighting. And quite often the ones who got killed were probably the most faithful to their masters. When Pompey arrived in the Iberian Peninsula to fight Sertorius, the latter carried out a surprise attack on one of his legions and wiped out the slaves and beasts of burden as well as the soldiers (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.13.109). And during a battle against the Parthians, Marcus Antonius lost a quarter of his soldiers and a third of the slaves who were accompanying the army (Velleius Paterculus, 2.82).

The presence of slaves at the theater of operations was particularly tricky for the masters: the slaves had to be watched over, for some ran away. In fact, war presents the slaves with a good opportunity to flee, as had the twenty thousand slaves of Attica after Decelea (Thucydides, 7.27). Likewise, “there were a great many slaves on Chios [...]. Because of their number, these slaves were very harshly punished for any misconduct. When the Athenian army seemed to be securely entrenched behind their wall, most of the slaves immediately deserted to them” (8.40.2). The slaves were not very reliable: “Ever since we lost our superiority, our slaves have been deserting ...” notes a letter by Nicias in the winter of 414–413, a few months before the defeat of Sicily (7.13). Running away was of no greater benefit than in time of peace, however, since most of the time the slaves were just exchanging one master for another.

Thus the slaves were motivated to stay on the right side, and their loyalty could be bought in exchange for a promise of manumission. In Chios, an inscription dating from the end of the fifth century, the time

of the Peloponnesian War, shows that some slaves are assembled in groups of ten, having probably been freed by the city after the defense of the town or the territory.⁷⁶ War was therefore not trivial; it also gave slaves a chance to drastically alter their condition. The more exceptional the circumstances, the greater the rewards. Thus, in 407, the naval battle of Arginusae, against Sparta, required, on the Athenian side, “one hundred and ten ships, putting aboard all who were of military age, whether slave or free.”⁷⁷ Aristophanes, for his part, comments on the measures from which the slaves benefitted:

—It’s disgraceful that those who fought just once at sea should suddenly be Plataeans and masters instead of slaves.

—No, even this I couldn’t say wasn’t well and good, in fact, I praise it. It’s the only sensible thing you did.⁷⁸

In the Greek cities, slaves were often useful for defending the city, when they were ready for it. Thus during the siege of Plataea in 431 BCE, household slaves came to the assistance of women (Thucydides, 2.4). Likewise, at Thebes, the slaves who had defended the city before Alexander were manumitted (Diodorus, *Library of History*, 17.11.2). But this measure was not universally accepted.

In Athens, Lycurgus exclaims: “Many sufferings were being visited upon the city; every citizen had felt misfortune at its worst; but the sight which would most surely have stirred the onlooker and moved him to tears over the sorrows of Athens was to see the people vote that slaves should be released, that aliens should become Athenians and the disenfranchised regain their rights.”⁷⁹ And Archinos orders the repeal of Thrasybulus’s proposal, which, in 403, with the restoration of democracy, “[admitted] to citizenship all those who had come back together from Peiraeus, some of whom were clearly slaves.”⁸⁰

The civil wars of the first century BCE, which involved confrontations between Sulla and Marius and his supporters, then Caesar and Pompey, and finally Marcus Antonius and Octavius, were punctuated by episodes during which slaves played a role. At first some of the belligerents recruited slaves as soldiers, or tried to recruit them, or in any case were accused by their enemies of having recruited them. Because it was a disgrace to turn slaves into combatants, especially at a time when risks to the Roman homeland

were not very great, the subject of slave recruitment figured prominently in the propaganda of some. We return here to the realm of politics: whereas Pompey, it was said, had brought slaves into his army, Caesar adhered on this issue much more closely to the great Roman tradition.

Can it be said that war brought slaves closer to free men? We do not think so. A rapprochement of this sort was not desired. Generally speaking, all that was asked of slaves was to continue being what they were supposed to be: loyal servants, to their masters first, then to the city. Nonetheless, under certain circumstances and in spite of the fear they inspired, their help could prove invaluable.

Thinking on Slavery

Ancient thinking on slavery seems to be marked by a paradox. We would expect that intellectuals spent their time developing a comprehensive justification of the practice; but this is not the case. We would expect that some criticized it and even called for its abolition, which would have represented supreme moral progress; nothing of the kind. For modern historians, it is customary to start with the authors in seeking to understand how slavery was experienced and perceived; but in Ancient times there was no system of independent thought about slavery: slavery was primarily a social practice, a diff-cult practice to which one adjusted. On the whole, thought amounted to summaries of “the day-to-day, face-to-face contact of exploiter and exploited.”⁸¹

Most of the texts were thus influenced by daily life, and respected the law of silence that tacitly enveloped the institution: do not talk about slaves, do not authorize them to talk and to be “seen,” this was the best way, in the eyes of the Ancients, to give an account of the reality of slavery and to accept it.

Indeed, this practice combines both the obvious fact that slavery exists and the difficulties inherent in its implementation—two aspects that, in theory, are almost incompatible. Discord is therefore legion among authors, as Plato observes (*Laws*, 6.776b–c), and sometimes within the work of a single author; slavery is complicated to understand and manage. Greek thought is interested in two issues: the practical methods of this delicate management of slaves and, on the other hand, the occasional theoretical justification that arises in the course of philosophical debate—for instance, on the difference between nature and law, or on the definition of the city-state. Even

Aristotle did not devote a treatise to slavery; he broaches the subject in *Politics*. Since it is the practice of slavery that dominates, thinking on the subject will evolve in tandem with the conditions of slavery and with its development during the classical period, in Greece and then in Rome.

From the beginning, at a time when it remains closely tied to war, slavery is one of the constraints that society imposes on the individual. Slavery, along with death, is the worst consequence of war and seems almost as inevitable as the latter. The use of force in slavery appears to be a decisive component of human society: “there is [...] such a thing as a slave or a man that is in slavery by law, for the law is a sort of agreement under which the things conquered in war are said to belong to their conquerors,” writes Aristotle.⁸² Slavery is unavoidable, and it becomes an unknown variable of individual fate; such is the case throughout Antiquity.

These ideas were not completely rigid, however: they evolved during the classical era in Greece. On the one hand, the condition of the war captive improved: ransom can replace enslavement. On the other hand, the notion of unjust war appeared (*Politics*, 1.1255a 22–29); enslavement is, then, no longer just. The conquering of Greeks by Greeks was thus challenged, in the fourth century, because of the difficulties of the helotic system of dependency. “The deity has given freedom to all men, and nature has made no one a slave.” We owe this unique direct criticism of slavery from around 370 BCE to Alcidas; he is referring to the Messenians, who were demanding their independence. The denunciations of slavery as an unjust law of war are therefore born of a reflection not on human rights, but on the notion of the Greek citizen.

Wars with non-Greeks, on the other hand, presented fewer problems and led to the acceptance of slavery among the vanquished without any soul-searching: “some persons [...] do not mean to assert that Greeks themselves if taken prisoners are slaves, but that barbarians are,” writes Aristotle (*Politics*, 1.1255a 20, 28 ff.). The development of the practice of buying slaves contributed to establishing people’s thinking on the subject (let us recall that the Chians were the first to buy slaves who were also barbarians). Nobody questioned the right to buy barbarians, since it was almost a step forward for humanity: previously men were too poor to own slaves. If criticism was voiced, it was the same as for all forms of wealth: there must not be too much of it.

Although the purchasing of slaves was readily accepted, this does not necessarily mean that on a theoretical level a comprehensive

justification of the practice was offered. But there is no doubt that attempts at justification exist. If we have to wait for Aristotle to see them expressed clearly, this is partially the result of chance with respect to sources that are available to us. Aristotle's justification of slavery based on nature is usually presented as a caricature that some believe even he did not find satisfactory.⁸³ The belief that men are naturally different is not peculiar to a single author. It stems from the widespread idea that "among barbarians all are slaves except one," the great king,⁸⁴ whereas with regard to the Greeks, "of no men are they called the slaves or vassals."⁸⁵ Comedy attempts to convey the theme of the slave's bad nature, both physical and moral. It is thus impossible to dispute the frequency of these racist ideas in the thinking and behavior of slaveholders in Greece, as in other slave societies.

This likening of slaves to barbarians and the conviction that they are bad by nature have contradictory consequences. On the one hand, they are meant to encourage the Greeks to accept the enslavement of barbarians, because slavery is all they are good for. On the other hand, their "bad" nature can only lead to their rejection of Hellenic domination. This dichotomy provoked debate on nature and law that was initiated by the Sophists in the fifth century. These authors, whom in the following century Aristotle would call the "specialists in law," and with whom we are unfortunately not familiar, asserted, particularly in fifth-century tragedy, that nature does not turn men into slaves: "Many slaves are disgraced by their name alone, but their soul can be freer than that of free people" (Euripides, fr. 831). It is "by virtue of law" that one person is a slave and the other free. If slavery is a result of the law, it can only be accepted as an injustice, an act of violence, a constraint. If this is the case, the law exists so that there can be slavery; the law of the city creates the slave. In fact, as we have seen, this judgment corresponds to the reality.

How should we understand slavery? The two great philosophers of the fourth century, Plato and Aristotle, asked themselves this question. Plato seeks to answer it in practical terms: "As to most chattels, it is easy enough both to see what they should be and to acquire them; but servants present all kinds of difficulties. The reason is that our language about them is partly right and partly wrong; for the language we use both contradicts and agrees with our practical experience of them."⁸⁶ Plato also blames masters who complicate their lives and that of their slaves through "a course of excessively foolish indulgence in the treatment of [their slaves]" (*Laws*, 6.778a). Aristotle proceeds differently: resuming the debate on law and nature, he addresses the philosophical foundations of slavery. He recalls the position of those

who consider slavery to be a convention, but in order to better distance himself from that position: he pursues his own objective. He does not go back to the preconceived idea of the barbarian's predestination. He proceeds in stages. If he considers slavery to be natural for certain types of men, this is primarily a way of saying that slavery is not constructed by the city. Affirming the concept of slavery by nature therefore amounts to a criticism, on Aristotle's part, of the notion that the law is the foundation of slavery, even if instituting slavery is a political decision.

The slave is simultaneously a man and a possession. "There can be no friendship with a slave as slave, though there can be as a human being."⁸⁷ Slaves in the city are possessions; are they part of the city? No, answers Aristotle: "slaves also are not in one of the classes mentioned, nor are freedmen. For it is true that not all persons indispensable for the existence of a state are to be deemed citizens" (*Politics*, 1.1278a 1). Possessions also do not belong to the city; the only logical conclusion is that the slave belongs to the household. Thus Aristotle differentiates between political authority and the authority of the master in the household. And in so doing, he legitimates the belief that the slave is not part of the city, that he only has meaning in the *oikia*.

In this context, the *raison d'être* of the slave is *need*, which forces all men to live as part of a household. This need is more a matter of nature than of legal convention. Aristotle justifies slavery by its usefulness: "a slave is as it were a member or tool of his master, a tool is a sort of inanimate slave."⁸⁸ Or again: "if every tool could perform its own work when ordered, or by seeing what to do in advance" (*Politics*, 1.1253b). Herein lies the natural character of the slave.

Armed with this reflection, Aristotle develops a more or less contradictory typology of both the differences in nature and the specializations of individuals based on their bodies: "The intention [...] is to make the bodies [...] of free men and of slaves different—the latter strong for necessary service, the former erect and unserviceable for such occupations ..." (*Politics*, 1.1254b 28–29). But he immediately adds: "Often the very opposite comes about—some persons have the body of the free man, others the soul" (31–32). There are, by nature, rulers and subordinates: "The free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form" (1.1260a 7–14). Moral qualities differ as well: the slave "needs only a small amount of virtue, in fact just enough to prevent him from failing in his tasks owing to intemperance

and cowardice” (1260a33–1260b3). These inferior categories do not belong to a “degenerate” humanity, however, unlike some barbarians on the fringes of society, or madmen (*Nichomachean Ethics*, 1149a 8–13).⁸⁹

Despite the importance that is generally attached to this description, the essential point in the reflection of Aristotle remains his justification of the slave as a necessity that is acknowledged within the household, in order to create a community of interests. In fact, the goal of the “nature” argument is to assimilate the slave into a community of interests so as to legitimate his presence in the city, without in any way making him a member of the city. In this sense, the “natural” dispositions of slaves and masters prove to be excellent and necessary. Indeed, “there is a certain community of interest and friendship between slave and master in cases where they have been qualified by nature for those positions, although when they do not hold them in that way but by law and by constraint of force the opposite is the case” (*Politics*, 1.1255b 12–16). The position of Aristotle is therefore far from being a caricature. It is developed at an historically important moment, when everything in the laws and customs falls into place in a definitive manner, so as to allow for the unobstructed functioning of slavery. This explains why all subsequent reflections on slavery were based on Aristotle.

His presentation of slavery as a private matter of the *oikos*, however, does not fully satisfy all ancient thinkers. We see this among Aristotelian thinkers themselves, including Pseudo-Aristotle, author of *Economics*; of all Greek conceptions of slavery of the classical era, his is by far the most open and progressive. According to him, freedom is the real price of the slave’s labor. Unlike Aristotle, this author (who may be Theophrastus) considers all properties, all *ktèmata*, to be part of the city; the first and most important of the *ktèmata* is man (*anthrôpos*), that is to say, the slave.

This reflection will influence Stoic thinking, which also stems in part from the position, developed by the Cynics in the fourth century, that slavery is a simple social convention. The Stoics come to see slavery as a primarily moral condition: everyone is a slave of something, with the exception of the sage who, alone, is immune to any dependency. It is admittedly odd to center the reflection on an almost metaphorical conception of slavery! But this is not the most important aspect of the question in early Stoicism, at the beginning of the Hellenistic era; for these thinkers established for the first time a close connection between slaves and free workers. Henceforth, the salaried worker under contract would be in some way assimilated to a *ktèma*, to a possession, that could be used by someone—master or

employer. A famous expression attributed to Chrysippus specifies that “the slave is a mercenary for life” (*perpetuus mercennarius*). And in a summary of the Stoic doctrine, Diogenes Laertius writes: “freedom [is] the power of independent action, whereas slavery is privation of the same; though indeed there is also a second form of slavery consisting in subordination, and a third which implies possession of the slave as well as his subordination.”⁹⁰

The impact of this thinking is considerable: slavery is no longer separated from the other statuses by the gap that existed since the laws of Solon in Athens. Henceforth we are confronted with of a “spectrum” of servitudes. This philosophical evolution is contemporaneous with an improvement in the slave condition: some slaves can be privileged and hope for manumission, as is being said increasingly often in Athens. According to Anaxandrides (second quarter of the fourth century), “many, today, are not even free, and tomorrow they will be the locals of Sounion”—named after a subdivision of Attica close to the slave-rich mining region of Laurium. Once the modalities of slavery had been established, starting at the end of the classical era in Greece, ancient society reached a level of reflection that made it possible for common thinking, in the Roman era, to align itself with the Stoic mainstream. This Stoic vulgate does indeed constitute the ideology that is best suited to ancient slave society.

Roman thinking on slavery thus stands in continuity with the Greek legacy. And it is not excessive to say that this legacy that Rome preserved is also found in the works of Jewish and Christian authors, in spite of the originality of Judaism and Christianity. Slavery gives rise to three main positions. It may be considered a reality that is independent of us, which must then be accepted as is, even if this means criticizing certain aspects of it and modifying it through more reasonable and moral behavior. From this perspective, the basis of slavery and its legitimacy are not questioned; discussion is limited to ethical reflection on the relations between masters and slaves. According to the second position, slavery corresponds to natural aptitudes and seems fully legitimate. The third position questions its legitimacy and explains it as the effect of a contingent social convention. These three positions belong to different philosophical traditions, but only in part, and it even happens that a given author does not adhere consistently to a single position.

Thus without questioning the underlying basis for slavery the first of the three positions is limited to a practical moral standard that might improve and humanize the institution. Particularly evident in the writings of the Stoics, notably those of Seneca, this position was

by far the most widespread in Roman times. It does not, however, rule out the second, for the legitimation of slavery does not obviate the need for a moral reflection on the way the master should deal with it on a daily basis. The first position is often accompanied by criticisms of those who adopt other behaviors—criticisms that are sometimes caustic, but that do not call into question the existence of slavery. Seneca criticizes masters who treat their slaves too harshly and who conspicuously force them to remain standing during endless dinners (*Moral Epistles*, 47.2–3). He also advises his readers to limit the numbers of their slaves, which, moreover, would allow them to reduce their expenses and their worries about management (*On Tranquility of Mind*, 8). “Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters,” that is his moral principle.⁹¹

This moral reflection is adopted by Pliny the Younger, Epictetus, and, later, many Christian authors who follow the example of Saint Augustine. Under the Principate, jurists and the state itself take it into account and began to intervene in the relations between masters and slaves. Thus, in the second century CE Gaius writes: “But at the present day neither Roman citizens nor any other persons subject to the rule of the Roman people are allowed to treat their slaves with excessive and causeless harshness... . [W]e ought not to abuse our lawful right.”⁹²

The second position, which is inherited from Aristotle and bases slavery on nature, was not the most common among thinkers of the Roman era. According to Augustine, however, it was presented and defended in Cicero’s *On the Republic*, in the person of Laelius, friend of Scipio Emilian: “It was replied in behalf of justice, that this ruling of the provinces is just, because servitude may be advantageous to the provincials, and is so when rightly administered.” And: “ ‘Do we not see,’ he [Cicero, in the person of Laelius] says, ‘that, to each thing which is best, dominion is given by nature herself, to the greatest advantage of the least things?’ ”⁹³ A little later Philo of Alexandria echoes this position: “For that which is wicked and void of reason is, by its own nature, a slave in the eye of God; but that which is good and endowed with reason and better, is looked upon as powerful by him.”⁹⁴

In the fourth century CE, Ambrosius in turn presented a similar conception of slavery, with regard to the biblical episode of Jacob and his brother Esau: if God wanted Jacob to dominate his brother Esau, it is because the latter was naturally inferior to Jacob; he lacked reason; by nature he was destined to serve.⁹⁵ Sometimes Augustine shares this opinion. He writes that slavery is the result of the sins of humankind in general, and therefore cannot disappear. Furthermore,

he justifies slavery by the individual sin of the enslaved person: "God ... knows how to award fit punishments to every variety of offence."⁹⁶ The arguments of these Christian authors are not always the same as those of the pagans, for the philosophical and ideological context is different, at least in part. But like their predecessors, they justify slavery by finding "natural" and permanent grounds for it.

The third position holds that, far from being based on the natural disposition of peoples or individuals, slavery is the result of historical contingencies or social conventions. We have seen that Aristotle cited and criticized thinkers who considered the master's authority over the slave to be unnatural and the product of violence because, according to nature, there is no difference between men. Such ideas also existed in Roman times, particularly among Jewish and Christian authors. Philo bears witness to this in his treatises, observing that certain contemporary Jews did not think that slavery was a natural institution, condemned its existence, and voluntarily deprived themselves of the service of slaves. This was true of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that is commonly identified with the Dead Sea Scrolls (Philo of Alexandria, *Every Good Man Is Free*, 79), or of the Therapeutae, a Jewish sect that led a particularly contemplative life (Philo of Alexandria, *The Contemplative Life*, 70). Although he showed respect and even admiration for such groups, Philo did not share their ideas, and thought that it was impossible to do without slavery.⁹⁷

Certain Christian authors also questioned the validity of slavery, although in a more or less radical way. The certainty that God treats all men and women the same and loves all equally is obviously one of the abiding features of Christian thought, but it does not necessarily imply a condemnation of slavery as an institution of human society. Anyone who views slavery as a contingent institution and who, furthermore, disavows it, can be led to call for its abolition; but he does not necessarily do so. Such is the case of Lactantius, at the beginning of the fourth century: far from limiting himself to condemning slavery, he insisted on the fact that excessive inequalities in wealth and status represented just so many obstacles to the exercise of justice, and criticized, in this connection, the entire Greco-Roman tradition (Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, 5.14.15 to 5.15.3). He saw slaves as brothers and equals in spirit and in religion; but although he disapproved of slavery, he did not envisage its disappearance.

He who went the furthest in condemning slavery is Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century. Not only did he consider that, before God, slaves are the equals of free men, but he viewed the possession of slaves as a sin, and a very serious sin. Indeed, although all creatures are at God's service and belong to God, the owner of slaves has

appropriated some of these creatures, which amounts to defying divine order and claiming a right that can only be God's. God allowed man to subjugate animals and plants, but he cannot have given the same authorization with regard to men and women (*Commentary on Ecclesiastes, Homily IV, 2.7*). How can one tolerate that a man or a woman is sold and that a monetary price is attached to him or her? Peter Garnsey, who stresses the vigor and the radical nature of Gregory's criticism, presents the latter as the hero of his narrative.⁹⁸ Did Gregory free all of his slaves? We do not know. But as Peter Garnsey acknowledges, even he did not argue for the abolition of slavery. In addition to Gregory of Nyssa we could number, among the heroes of our narrative, the Essenes and the Therapeutae; however, to our knowledge, they also did not call for abolition. No ancient thinker did, and there never was, in classical Antiquity, an abolitionist movement.

6 ESCAPING SLAVERY

Freedom was, without a doubt, the dream of all slaves of Antiquity. But only some of them were able to realize that dream, and under a wide variety of individual circumstances at that. If slavery endured throughout Antiquity, it is because its foundation was solid. And yet the master-slave relationship was not neutral, free of tensions; on the contrary, it was characterized by a wide range of attitudes and behaviors, from trust (very infrequent) to defiance (more common), indeed to hostility or hatred. Most authors, like Isocrates (*Panathenaicus*, 12.214), Aristophanes, or Menander in the case of Greece, expressed conventional views, emphasizing the potential wickedness of slaves and insistently denouncing various types of servile behavior: insolence, lying, stealing, laziness, and shoddy work. Clearly, the masters were often fearful.¹

The slave's options for taking action were limited. In Aristophanes' *The Knights* (line 32), two slaves who witness with consternation the arrival of a new slave and the change of their own situation envisage only two possible solutions: flight or death. If one adds to these revolt and manumission, one has identified all possible ways of escaping slavery. These means of escape are obviously not all on the same level. In addition to suicide, flight and revolt also often ended in death. And yet some slaves were probably able to free themselves by these means. Physical punishment, torture, and death were never far away; but there were also cracks through which this or that slave managed to slip out.

In the slavery of the Americas, slave suicides were not unusual—far from it. The captain of a slave ship tells how, upon his arrival in the Antilles, he lost thirty-three slaves, who suddenly jumped ship and drowned themselves. At the end of the eighteenth century, a land owner in Jamaica, William Fitzmaurice, complained of having lost, in one year, a dozen slaves who took their own lives.² In Antiquity, slaves committed suicide either when they saw that they were going to be enslaved, or when they already were. In the second case, they sometimes took action following a misdeed that was going to result in a very severe punishment. Seneca, for his part, mentions two gladiators who killed themselves before entering the arena (Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius*, 70.20–21 and 23). It is of course impossible to determine the frequency of such suicides. In any event, when a slave was sold, if he had previously attempted suicide, the seller was obliged to inform the buyer.³

Freedom in F light?

Flight, which is the most common route to escape, is what slave owners feared the most. It was attributed not to the master's behavior but to that of the slave, who was violating his contract (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2.1.16–17). Buyers of slaves tried to anticipate the problem. In Rome, probably starting in the middle of the first century BCE, a councilors' edict required all sellers of slaves to report a subject who had a tendency to run away, or even to wander (the "wanderer" slave, *erro*, is he who lingers outside the house longer than expected, but who does return to his master's place—unlike the fugitive, *fugitivus*).⁴ If the seller had not reported that the slave was prone to flight, the buyer could have the sale cancelled, provided he brought an action within six months' time. Or, during the Principate, he could get a price reduction by bringing an action within a year. On a papyrus found in Egypt and written in Greek, a sales contract was preserved that refers to a ten-year-old female slave of Galatian origin, Abaskantis. The sale had been made in 142 BCE, at Sideus in Pamphylia, and the buyer was probably a slave merchant who had then taken the young girl off to Egypt. The deed stipulates that Abaskantis was free of all physical defects and that she was neither a wanderer nor prone to flight nor epileptic (*P. Turner*, 22).⁵

Although running away was not an easy decision to make and carry out, attempts were not at all exceptional. On the contrary: starting in classical Greek times, the texts testify to the everyday nature of such attempts (see, for instance, Demosthenes, 53.6) and to their public, even political, significance. The law suggests that the slave owner may intercede on behalf of his relatives or friends (Plato, *Laws* 11.914e).

The master of a runaway slave first seeks to determine his whereabouts. One has to be a bit of an eccentric, like the Cynic philosopher Diogenes, to not try to catch one's fugitive slave (Diogenes Laertius, 6.55). In the case of the Roman Empire, the master resorted to a town crier and also had wanted notices posted. In *Satyricon* a town crier enters an inn and shouts out: " 'Lost recently in the public baths, a boy aged about sixteen, hair curly, low habits, of attractive appearance, answers to the name of Giton. A reward of a thousand pieces will be paid to any person willing to bring him back or indicate his whereabouts.' "⁶ The correspondence of Cicero shows that the highest levels of society had private networks of friends and relatives from whom they solicited help in such circumstances. A letter from Cicero to his brother Quintus, propraetor of the province of Asia, is about a certain Licinus, slave of the tragedian Aesop; through various channels Cicero learns the route that the runaway has taken and that he is presently in Asia Minor (*Letters to and from Quintus*, fr.,

1.2). Subsequently, in 46 BCE, the slave Denys, who was in charge of Cicero's library and whom the latter trusted, in turn escapes. He crosses Italy and takes refuge on the other side of the Adriatic, in Illyria, where he passes for a freedman. Cicero writes to the propraetor of Illyricum province, P. Sulpicius Rufus; in 45 BCE, the next governor, the consul Vatinius, reprises the matter and gives the order to search for Denys on land and at sea (Cicero, *ad. Fam.*, 5.9.2; 5.11.3; 13.77.2–3).⁷

In order to catch their fugitive slaves, if they have the means, slaveholders can turn to professionals: the *drapēttagôgoi*, whom we find in Athens starting in the fifth century; the *fugitivarii* in Rome. In return for their services, they received either a bounty or the ownership of some slaves. From there to suspecting that some of these bounty hunters were also criminals, there is but one step—that we should probably not hesitate to take. Certain slave owners or traders, the “plagiarists,” sought to appropriate the slaves of others, either to add to their own human chattel or to resell them. The plagiarists incited slaves to flee and helped them to do so, or at the very least they took advantage of their flight; they then frequently branded their prey, before locking them up in an *ergastula*. Hunters of runaway slaves were particularly well placed to play the role of plagiarists. Sometimes they also sought to make a deal with the master, by agreeing to reimburse part of the slave's price.⁸ Under the Roman Empire it was decided that in order to thwart strategies and manipulation of this sort, a slave bought by a hunter could not be manumitted for ten years without the agreement of his preceding master (*Pauli Sententiae* 1.6A.1). As for the slave's part in all of this, he was obviously seen as an object from which a profit was to be made. But in a way, and indirectly, these more or less dubious transactions confirm that he occupied a place in the social edifice; they also confirm that the slave workforce was highly valued.

The public authorities also attempted to track down fugitives. Egyptian evidence and certain fragments of the *Digest* testify to exchanges of correspondence among the various administrators of a Roman province (the strategists in Egypt, for instance) and even among the governors of several provinces, as part of a concerted effort to arrest runaway slaves. They also had notices posted in regions other than those for which they were responsible.

In the Greek world, the city officially rewarded those who captured runaway slaves. An inscription attests that a man was rewarded by Athens for having caught three slaves in Chios (*SEG* III, 92); and international conventions between cities regularly provided for protections and agreements for the handing over of fugitives. Facilitating the escape of slaves from another city constituted an act of

war: the Peloponnesian War was triggered in 432 BCE by the decree of Athens against Megara, who, among other “wrongdoings,” had welcomed many Athenian fugitive slaves (Thucydides, 1.139.2). In Alexander’s time, in order to assure an adequate number of slaves in the royal armies, an insurance against flight was created and guaranteed by the authorities (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Economics*, 2.2.34).

Fugitive slaves who were caught suffered the consequences of their flight: they were thrown into prison—the Anakēion in Athens was a prison of this sort. In addition they were probably—albeit not systematically—tattooed, that is, in the literal sense, *stigmatized*. In the Near East, tattooing slaves was commonplace. In a passage from Lysias quoted by Athenaeus (612c), we encounter a certain Theocritos, who is called *ēlaphostiktos* because he bears the imprint of a stag as the symbol of his fugitive nature. There are many examples of this sort. The slaves bore these imprints on their shoulder or head.

We can also infer the importance of flight from the fact that, in an effort to contain it and limit its effects, the city acknowledged it to some extent on an institutional level. Flight did not necessarily produce a rupture; sometimes it simply represented a change in the slave’s situation. Thus a slave fleeing his master’s home could take refuge in an asylum provided for that purpose. One such asylum was the Thēsēion in Athens, near the agora—placed, as if by chance, under the patronage of the mythical king Theseus, who incarnated social cohesion. At the same time, this meant that the slave could not take refuge wherever he pleased: unlike free men, slaves were prohibited from seeking sanctuary in the temples of the Acropolis. The Thēsēion is often presented as a “reserved” location where asylum was sought by bad slaves, who did not want to work (in any case, flight represented a reduction in the value of the master’s capital). Next door stood the Anakēion, which may have been a detention center for bad slaves, where the master could get back his slave, and which was probably also the theater for trials.

Under the Principate, the slave who was seriously abused by his master could take refuge with a god or a priest, in a sanctuary or near an altar. By so doing, he obtained the right to be sold to a different master, in the hopes that the new master would prove to be a little more humane. Gaius points out that this measure was reaffirmed by the emperor Antonius (Gaius, *Institutes*, 1.53). Was it already in force in Rome during the Republican era? Jean-Christian Dumont thinks it was, and his conclusion is entirely convincing.⁹ Even if we do not know when and under what conditions the slave’s request was granted, the very existence of this “right to asylum” is of great importance, as a principle anyway. But it did not mean that the slave

was liberated: he was resold, and thus did not escape slavery.

Violence and Slave Revolts

Flight is not unrelated to another aspect of slavery: individual revolt and physical violence against the master. The fear of this eventuality is always present in the mind of slave owners. Xenophon alludes to the murder of master by slave (*Hiero*, 10.4), although none was documented in fourth-century Athens. On the other hand, we do find reference to a failed attempt in the previous century (Antiphone, *On the Murder of Herodes*, 5.69). Plato, for his part, is troubled when contemplating the situation of an isolated slaveholder:

But now suppose some god should catch up a man who has fifty or more slaves—and waft him with his wife and children away from the city and set him down with his other possessions and his slaves in a solitude where no freeman could come to his rescue. What and how great would be his fear, do you suppose, lest he and his wife and children be destroyed by the slaves?[10](#)

The seeming rarity of acts of violence against the master is explained by our dearth of information regarding the private lives of individuals. Furthermore, there was no reason to make such facts too public. The Ancient texts refer much less to them than to the large collective revolts. A rare testimony relates a tragic incident that occurred in Amyzon, a small city in Caria, during the Hellenistic period.

Demetrius, son of Pankrates. Demetrius, mourned by all, lost in gentle sleep and bouts of drinking nectar from Bromios at the banquet, throat slit at the hands of a slave and consumed along with the house in a great fire; I went to Hades, while my father, my brothers and my old mother collected bones and ashes in their bosom. But he who had committed such acts, my fellow citizens crucified him alive, prey to animals and

In Rome, the best-known episode—thanks to Tacitus—is the murder of the city prefect, Pedanius Secundus, in 61 BCE (Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.42–45). This very important senator was assassinated by one of his domestics. Without taking a position, Tacitus suggests two possible motives: either the master had refused to manumit the slave after having agreed on a price (very often slaves bought their freedom with the money from their peculium), or the slave, who was passionately in love with another boy, could not bear the rivalry of his master.

Pliny the Younger, for his part, relates the assassination of the senator Larcius Macedo, around 100 CE. Larcius Macedo was staying at his villa near Fourmiae. A group of slaves who lived in the villa rushed at him while he was bathing, struck him and left him for dead on the hot floor of his private baths. He regained consciousness, only to die a few days later, surrounded by other slaves who had remained faithful to him, as well as by his slave concubines (Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 3.14). Pliny considers Larcius Macedo to be an “overbearing and cruel” master (*superbus et saevus*); in spite of this, and although he prides himself on being more humane, Pliny still fears that he in turn will be subjected to fits of rage on the part of his slaves. He writes: “You see the dangers, the affronts and insults we are exposed to, and no one can feel at all secure because he is an easy and mild-tempered master, for villainy not deliberation murders masters.” At the same time, he observes that although Larcius Macedo was the son of a freedman, this had not kept him from being cruel: “He [...] forgot—or rather remembered too keenly—that his own father had been a slave.”¹²

Despite all possible and imaginable mitigation, slavery is based on violence. At any given moment, it can give rise to the most brutal violence—owing to either the master or the slave. In cases of murder, such as those referred to, the city magistrates substitute themselves for the masters and their relatives for the purpose of punishing the slaves. According to an old rule, all those who live in the household at the time of the master’s murder must be killed. This rule was still applied in 61 CE, despite the emotions that it generated in the ranks of the Roman populace (which emotions confirm that this populace included many freedmen and that the latter did not hold slaves in contempt).

Whether or not it is accompanied by violence, flight can be seen as part of the larger phenomenon of revolt. Often the corollary of flight is what in modern times is known as marooning, that is, life outside the law. The slaves fled to areas where they could hide—ports, the biggest

cities, inns. Some tried to enter the army, an act that was illegal in Rome and punishable by death. Others managed to join teams of gladiators. Still others took refuge in remote and poorly controlled areas.

When Caesar arrived in Egypt after the defeat and death of Pompey in the fall of 48 BCE, he clashed with the army of Achillas (strategist of Ptolemy XIV, brother of Cleopatra). According to Caesar, this army was made up of a very diverse group of men: former Roman soldiers who had settled in Egypt, pirates and bandits from several Roman provinces, condemned and exiled men, and fugitive slaves from the Empire. Caesar adds that “in Alexandria all our runaway slaves were sure of finding protection on the condition that they should give their names and enlist as soldiers [in the Egyptian army].”¹³ The expression *fugitivi omnes nostri*, “all our runaway slaves,” conveys the relationship that tied the slave to the territory of the Empire; this relationship was the result of property rights: slaves belonging to free men—Romans and foreigners—of the Empire were “ours.”

Common forms of banditry relied on recruiting fugitives. Such recruitments were all the more frequent since the city was in turmoil: civil or foreign wars constituted various occasions for the slaves to seize on. When the Athenians landed in Chios in 412 BCE, the slaves joined them in order to revolt against their masters (Thucydides, 8.40.2). And this incident was probably not exceptional on the island. Thucydides says that because of their numbers, slaves on Chios were difficult to control; and at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, mention is made of revolts by slaves who took refuge in the most inaccessible areas of the island. The episode is particularly famous because of the personality of the slaves’ leader, a certain Drimakos (Athenaeus, 6.265–66). Historians often present him as a model leader of slave revolts, whereas in fact he worked more for an amicable settlement and cooperation between masters and fugitive slaves than for the abolishment of slavery. Indeed, under his aegis, these slaves formed a true small state (official seal included), which was to have negotiated an agreement with the city of Chios. It is Drimakos’s death that revived the unrests.

What is the difference between slave protests and revolts? It all depends on the recurrence and relative scale of the events. One usually reads that in the Greek world, revolt was much more frequent among nonslave dependents than among commodity-slaves. This conclusion is based primarily on the example of the Helots of Sparta, but it is probably not consonant with historical reality, which is not so clear-cut. Plato does not speak exclusively of the Helots of Messenia; rather he observes “how many evils result from slavery—as in the

frequent revolts in Messenia, and in the States where there are many servants kept who speak the same tongue.”¹⁴ The same general idea is present in the work of Pseudo-Aristotle, this time with respect to the private domain: “We should, moreover, take hostages (for our slaves’ fidelity) by allowing them to beget children; and avoid the practice of purchasing many slaves of the same nationality, as men avoid doing in towns.”¹⁵ The difference between protests and revolts resides not in the servile status of the rebels but in the political resonance of the Helot revolts, which relied on neighboring states that were hostile to Sparta (Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.1269a). A revolt that spreads takes on the appearance of a war, but the cities do all they can to prevent its progression, which is why revolts do not spread easily. For what the cities fear most is *stasis*. Thus it takes exceptional circumstances—either a crisis within a city or an external upheaval—for such revolts to become perceptible. With respect to Rome, available evidence focuses more on large collective revolts than on the bloody trivia of family life. Some of these large revolts affected only one city or a limited region; but two of them inflamed all of Sicily, and a third, all of Italy—with repercussions as far as the Aegean world and western Asia Minor, which in the last half of the second century BCE experienced at least one important historical moment when conditions were ripe for slave revolts.

The second century BCE was marked by sporadic examples from the beginning. In 198, according to Livy, two slaves living in Setia, south of Rome, informed the praetor of a plot hatched by other slaves in the city, as well as in the neighboring cities of Norba and Circeii (Livy, 32.26.4–18). The movement was nipped in the bud. Soon after, a new revolt threatened to break out in Preneste, and five hundred slaves were executed. In 196, it was Etruria’s turn (33.36.1–3). There too, the matter was settled quickly. On each occasion, Rome took charge of the repression and sent soldiers to overcome the rebels—a legion in the case of Etruria. In 185–184 BCE, a larger uprising took place in Apulia.¹⁶ Many slaves were involved, mainly shepherds; their revolt was less against their masters than against Rome. Furthermore, the affair had a religious tone, for it was in very much in keeping with the Dionysian cult. Starting with that uprising in Apulia, Dionysus joined the pantheon of great divinities honored by revolting slaves.

Moses I. Finley has insisted on the exceptional nature of these slave revolts. In the Roman world, he writes, they only occurred in the second and first centuries BCE, in regions with a high concentration of slaves and weak surveillance.¹⁷ This is both true and false. If we take into account all the slave revolts of which we are aware, we observe that they were numerous and affected diverse regions. Furthermore it happened that groups of slaves rose up at the instigation of one or

several free men, for whom they served as a tactical mass. Strictly speaking, these were not slave revolts; nonetheless, the uprisings show the ability of slaves to rebel against the established order at the risk of their lives. This is what happened, for example, in 103 BCE, when, out of love for a slave girl, Titus Vettius, a Roman knight from Capua, incited his slaves to rise up, and became their leader by appointing himself king (Diodorus, 36.2a). But Moses I. Finley is right in the sense that there is no comparison between the various disturbances that broke out here and there and the three “Servile Wars” that took place in Sicily and Italy between 130 and 70 BCE. These were enormous uprisings that qualify as wars.

The Servile Wars of the Second and First Centuries BCE

Quite a number of details about these wars have been handed down to us, for instance by Diodorus of Sicily and Appian, both Greek-speaking historians of the Roman era, and by Plutarch in his *Crassus*.¹⁸ In the twentieth century these wars have fascinated and divided modern scholars, especially the war in Italy, which was dominated by the central figure of Spartacus. Commentaries and works about these wars are too numerous to be counted. At the time of this publication, the best study on the subject is still the one by Jean-Christian Dumont; it is precise, very mindful of the texts, and ideologically open.¹⁹

Many slaves in Sicily were freeborn, writes Diodorus, and they worked as shepherds. They were considered bandits, although it was in fact their own masters who incited them to banditry. The slaves of a rich Sicilian owner, Damophilos, who had gone to him to complain about their lack of clothing, were beaten with sticks before being encouraged to steal what they needed in neighboring towns. In 135 BCE, four hundred of these slaves entered Enna, in the center of Sicily. Some of them went to get Damophilos and his wife Megallis in their villa, and brought them to Enna’s theater, where all the rebel slaves formed a tribunal of sorts. Both of them were killed. Their daughter, on the other hand, who was liked because of her gentleness, was spared; she was taken under guard to Catania, where she had relatives. Diodorus, who was influenced by the Stoic philosopher Posidonius, comments: “The slaves’ fury was the result not of a natural ferocity, but of the arrogant treatment to which they had been subjected; and they sought to punish those who had treated them unjustly.”

This was the beginning of the First Servile War. A slave of Syrian origin, Eunus, worshipper of the Syrian goddess, urged other slaves of

the region to revolt, and armed several thousands of them with scythes, bills and slings. He proclaimed himself king under the name of Antiochus. At the same time, in the west of the island, another troop of slaves in revolt led by Cleon, of Sicilian origin, seized Agrigento. Rather than competing with eunus, Cleon submitted to him. The number of slaves who were supporters of Eunus and Cleon is not really known: there must have been at least seventy thousand of them, and maybe as many as two hundred thousand. They entered Murgantia (Morgantina), Heraclea, and Tauromenium (Taormina). One of the two consuls in 134 BCE, C. Fulvius Flaccus, was unable to restore order. It was the consul of the following year, L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, who dealt the slaves a fatal blow by recapturing Morgantina and killing or imprisoning several thousands of them. At the beginning of 132 the city of Enna was taken back, followed by Taormina, and Eunus was captured.

Less than thirty years later, similar events took place, again in Sicily. In 104 BCE, Nicomedes, king of Bithynia (which was an independent state at the time), asked the Senate to release the freeborn, who were his subjects and had been sold into slavery by tax collectors. In Sicily, the praetor freed eight hundred slaves in two days, but under pressure from the slave owners he had to stop applying the decree of the Senate. This signaled the beginning of the Second Servile War: the slaves living in Syracuse and the surrounding area revolted. A Roman knight, P. Clonius, was murdered on his estate. The insurgents proclaimed a certain Salvius king; the latter assumed the name Tryphon and took up residence in Triocala. In the west of the island some ten thousand slaves rose up in Segesta and Lilybaeum, under the leadership of Athenion. Initially rivals, the two leaders joined forces. After the accidental death of Tryphon, Athenion became the sole leader of the revolt. In 103 BCE, the Roman praetor scored some successes, but failed to overcome the insurgents; nor was his successor able to resolve the problem in 102. It is only in 101 BCE that, in the course of battle, the consul Manius Aquilius personally killed Athenion and quelled the insurrection.

According to the ancient authors, these two movements had repercussions on the Greek world in at least two places: Delos, which, as we have seen, was the hub of the slave trade, and Athens, the closest large city. In 134, on hearing of the victories of the Sicilian slaves over the Roman army, “more than a thousand in Attica [rose up], and yet others in Delos and many other places.”²⁰ Then in 104–102, at Laurion in Attica, “they revolted, murdered the superintendents of the mines, seized the hill of Sunium, and for a long time plundered Attica.”²¹

An important development played itself out in Asia Minor between 133 and 129: the so-called war of Aristonikos. Aristonikos, pretender to the royal throne of Pergamon, rebelled against Rome after the death in 133 of the last Pergamon king, Attalus III, who in his will had left his kingdom to the Romans. The various Greek cities of the region sided either with or against Rome in a war that was especially harsh, particularly in Caria. “The slaves, because of their owners’ maltreatment of them, joined [Aristonikos] in his mad venture and involved many cities in great misfortune” (Diodorus, 34–35.2.26).

Historians have interpreted Aristonikos’s war in various ways. For some it was a revolt against slavery; for others, a political operation by which, if only to boost the numbers, slaves were drawn into wars that did not directly concern them. The reality is probably closer to the second interpretation. It is, however, important to take into account the extraordinary chronological coincidences of these revolts, some of which took place in Italy and Sicily, and others in Greece. In the second half of the second century, Rome’s need for additional manpower resulted in an unprecedented disruption in the supplying of slaves. Large cargos of free men were captured in Asia Minor by Sicilian pirates, to be sold en masse in Delos. The sheer scale of these new circuits marked a break with the previous system; henceforth large numbers of free men could hold the Romans responsible for their loss of liberty.

It is undoubtedly wrong to read into all this activity a political message calling for a slave-free society. But it is possible that all the turmoil, which brought about large gatherings of slaves, was behind the toponyms of “slave cities”: there is a *Doulôn polis* near Colophon and a *Doulopolis* in Caria. Some years later, by revolting against Rome, Mithridates also supported the liberation of slaves.

The third major slave rebellion of the Roman world occurred in 73 BCE. It is the famous war of Spartacus, which began in the gladiatorial schools of Capua. Its leaders, the Thracian Spartacus and the Gallic Crixus, took refuge on the crater of Mount Vesuvius and were assisted by the shepherds of the Apennines. They strove to take the slaves back to their countries of origin, some to Gallia, others to Thrace. Spartacus’s egalitarian spirit in the sharing of the spoils and his first successes against Roman troops earned him a lot of sympathy, and, according to Appian, he found himself at the head of an army of seventy thousand men. They traveled up and down southern Italy, plundering as they went, and set about manufacturing weapons (Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.14.116–17). Appian insists on Spartacus’s opposition to gold and silver; he preferred buying iron and bronze—probably for ideological reasons and in order to increase the number

of weapons available.

Henceforth the Roman magistrates and senators took him very seriously, but their successes were nonetheless rare in 73 and 72. In 72, after the death of Crixus, Spartacus made his way north and defeated the praetor of Cisalpine Gaul, near Modena. But, surprisingly, he returned to Lucania, perhaps in order to leave Italy by ship. An exceptional command was entrusted to M. Licinius Crassus, and even Pompey was called upon and came back from Spain. The Gauls and the Germans who had joined Spartacus's army abandoned it. A deadly battle took place in northern Lucania or in Apulia; not without difficulty, Crassus overcame Spartacus, who was killed in combat with 12,300 of his partisans (Plutarch, *Crassius*, 11). In addition, six thousand slaves were crucified at the Via Appia, between Capua and Rome (Appian, *The Civil War*, 1.14.120–21). The remains of the army—five thousand men, according to Plutarch—were then conquered in northern Italy by Pompey. To the extent that they are reliable, these figures give us an idea of the number of combatants who were still with Spartacus in the spring of 71. In the summer of that same year, the Third Servile War was over, but it had caused intense alarm, even more so than the preceding wars.

Italy and Sicily were never again the theater of major slave wars. That all three wars took place within less than a century is surely no accident. It is evidence that at the time, rural slaves were particularly numerous and highly concentrated in certain regions. We should not rule out the possibility that, in the second half of the second century BCE, the number of slaves in southern Italy and Sicily was greater than it would be in later years, surpassing even the number of free men.

On the other hand, not all professional categories of slaves were likely to revolt in the same manner. Domestic slaves could assassinate their master in his private baths, but they did not provoke large uprisings. Even less so the privileged imperial and administrative slaves. It is the shepherd slaves who, in the course of these three wars, initiated the uprisings and who continued afterwards to play a very active role. This is probably because they spent a lot of time together and without their masters, particularly in areas of transhumance. They were therefore less subject to oversight and more complicit among themselves. In these uprisings the ethnic origins of the slaves were also very important: slaves who came from a given region and spoke the same language were more likely to revolt together and remain united until the end of the operations. It is no accident that, at a certain point, the Gauls and the Germans abandoned Spartacus, whereas the Thracian slaves continued to follow him. One fact that

has often been emphasized with regard to these events is the presence of free men who stood by the rebellious slaves and who fought with them. In Sicily, in Eunus's time, some of these free men appear to have been prisoners who were freed by slaves. But when Spartacus, Crixus, and their partisans occupied the crater of Mount Vesuvius, free men also came to join them.

These contemporaneous revolts scattered across the Mediterranean have led some historians to imagine a kind of underground "International" of revolutionary slaves. This is one of the arguments that was used in the debates between Marxists and non-Marxists (especially between communists and non-communists). Information definitely circulated and played a role, but the idea of an organization is not tenable. These movements of rebellious slaves did take on a national, ethnic, and also religious dimension—we have seen that they worshipped Dionysus (although not exclusively). It is nonetheless excessive to insist on these aspects at the expense of the social demands. Every Ancient movement had a religious tone, but in this case it was but one aspect of the phenomenon. The slaves who rose up were seeking freedom, and they rejected their slave status. This seems like a truism, but so many extravagant theories have been elaborated that it is useful to return to obvious facts. Were the slaves also thinking about a general abolition of slavery? This is more difficult to claim; unless we are very mistaken, the Ancient texts do not say so.

Manumission, Path to Freedom?

All told, the frequency of these crises remained limited. This is due less to the slaves' inertia or inability to act than to the adaptation of the slave system through the development of manumission. Indeed, revolts by freedmen are unknown. For the slave, manumission represents the way out; but it does not depend on the slave, or at least not primarily; for the most part, it depends on the master's wishes.

Manumission is linked specifically to the slave, since the rural dependent, the serf, can be neither sold nor directly emancipated by the master. The practice did not appear until the archaic period, when the slave's presence was no longer limited to aristocratic residences but was part of the political community. The most ancient freedmen known in the Greek world were manumitted because of their celebrity, as in the case of the poet Alcman or the courtesan Rhodopis. For a very long time, manumission in Greece was confined to the private sphere; the role of the city remained weak, since the freed slave did not become a citizen. It was not until the fourth century BCE that the practice became more widespread.

When was manumission adopted in Rome? In the classical era, there were three legal ways to free the slave, for which neither the dates nor the order of appearance is known: the *vindicta*, or fictional process, which simply concluded that the man or woman in question was already free beforehand; the enrollment of the newly emancipated slave on the citizens' lists at the time of the census; finally, testamentary manumission.

In the Greek world, several signs point to the fact that in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, manumission became more commonplace. Successive modifications of practices show this to have been the case. Slave owners gradually got used to making manumissions public by having them officially proclaimed by heralds at public gatherings, such as theater performances. Toward the middle of the fourth century, the spreading of these practices to Athens led to the prohibition of manumission announcements at the theater (Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon*, 44), probably because these private communiqués disrupted the performances and became confused with honors attributed by the city, which were announced in the same places (in fact, Pseudo-Aristotle refers to manumission as *athlon*, a word that is normally reserved for liturgical honors). One way or another, the official authorization of manumission was necessary, because the new situation of the freed slave had to be known to all. An Athenian comic author of the second quarter of the fourth century, Anaxandrides, observes that the phenomenon is widespread: “today many are not even free, and tomorrow they will be people of Sounion.” To be sure manumitted slaves did not become full-fledged citizens, but they were recognized by their place of residence in a deme (that is, an administrative subdivision of Attica). Some historians believe that the emancipated slave became a metic right away, a position that would confirm certain ancient texts (according to Harpocration, for instance, he pays the *mētoikon*), but it is unlikely that there was an immediate confusion of statuses, even if former slaves, like metics, were subject to the polemarch's tax. Other ancient sources, going back to Menander at the end of the fourth century, evoke, in addition to the *mētoikion*, the *triobola*, which is specific to the manumitted slave—who would thus have been subject to an annual tax of 12.5 drachmas.

A slave does not acquire the full status of freedman overnight; intermediate steps precede final “liberation.” This is why in the third century BCE the philosopher Chrysippus still called the freedman a “slave.” It is also why, in certain cities, manumission took the form of a fictitious sale to the god or of a consecration. One sees this in the Hellenistic period in several sanctuaries such as the one at Delphi, as well as in Epirus or Boeotia.²² The testaments of the philosophers,

who systematically manumitted some of their slaves, attest to at least two phases in the manumission process. The final phase is marked either by payment to the former master of a sum of money, called *lutra*, or by the master's renouncing the *lutra*. This is called "unreserved" manumission (*apolusis*), which means the settling or abandoning of all financial terms (Hyperides, *Against Athenogenes*, 4).

During a more or less lengthy initial period, the freed slave has continuing obligations to his former master; collectively known as *paramonè*, these are specified in established conventions. Thus is created the right of the freedman, with a law that Lycurgus had passed in the second half of the fourth century BCE, in the 320s. It is, moreover, the only known Athenian law on the subject. According to H. Klees's interpretation, which we espouse, it stipulates that "no Athenian, nor any person inhabiting in Athens, should be permitted to buy a captive, who was once free, to be a slave, without the consent of his former master."²³ This law only makes sense if the "former master" has financial interests vested in the freedman (or rights over his work) during a transitional period.

There is a link between this new law and a type of document that, in Athens, existed only in Lycurgus's time (not before 330 BCE, and until about 320). We refer here to inscriptions bearing lists of freedmen who, after acquittal in a trial (a *dikè apostasiou*), dedicated a silver phial (or bowl) containing one hundred drachmas to Athena (see *IG II/III*², 1553–59). All historians have acknowledged that these phials gave an official character to permanent manumission, which in some cases took the form of fictitious trials, like those that are known to have occurred elsewhere in Greece. But these inscriptions give the impression that trials with a view to manumission were not, in fact, fictitious; in some cases the owners got their slaves back (some lists begin with the name of the owner): it is likely that the manumission of these slaves remained conditional, that is to say that the owner retained certain rights even though the freed slaves did not really fall back into slavery. The payment of the phial constitutes a tax for full manumission or for the preservation of a tie with the former master.

Because there were also real trials, it is possible to determine the statistical distribution of the professions of manumitted slaves on the lists. Specifically, we observe a clear predominance of urban professions and of crafts, such as women's weaving. The frequency of these trades among the manumitted is explained by the comparatively widespread practice of manumission in urban centers, whereas in agriculture and mining it was rarer. (This same difference among the various economic sectors is subsequently found in the Roman world.) If these trials had been fakes, the distribution of activities would have been more diversified. The practice of manumission is probably linked

to economic and social habits: in some milieus and some commercial and urban activities, setting a slave up as a temporary freedman, more or less financially endowed by his master, allowed the slave to live officially “apart” from the master, “on his own” in a way. He was listed as such, and this is perhaps the very meaning of the Athenian expression *chôris oîkôn* (as a matter of fact, the freed-men of the phials were registered in a place of residence that was their own, something that corresponds perfectly to this notion). In fact, the procedure was common in small businesses and urban trades, where lenders of raw materials and money might find it advantageous to have autonomous slaves (those, for instance, who carried wool to the weavers). On the other hand, the *chôris oikountēs* were probably less common in agriculture—where freed slaves could have difficulty finding land to settle on, and in the mines—because it was the state that granted leases.

With respect to these institutions of classical Greece, Rome and the Roman world developed an original position: not only were the manumitted slaves of the Roman world considered free men, they also acquired the citizenship of their former masters, who had become their “patrons.” If their patron was a Roman citizen, they became Roman citizens; if the patron was a foreign inhabitant, they became foreign inhabitants. The prospect of enjoying this double advantage—freedom and citizenship—surely helped many slaves endure their fate. We cannot understand Roman slavery without taking into account both the diffusion of manumission and its precise nature in the Roman world. Although freedmen acquired the status of their patron, they obviously did not rise to his personal rank: the freedman of a senator was not a senator.

The freedman of a citizen was a citizen; yet this general rule allowed for numerous qualifications, and in fact the status of manumitted slaves proved to be very demanding. Indeed, they owed their patron respect (*obsequium*)—a notion that had legal implications and practical manifestations. They also owed him a certain amount of precisely defined work (the *operae*). They were subject to several other constraints. For instance, starting with the rule of Augustus, any freedman who had a minimum of a hundred thousand sesterces was obliged at the time of his death to leave part of the money to his patron or to the immediate heirs of his patron, unless he left behind three or more children (Gaius, *Institutes*, 3.39–76). If he had two children, the patron received a third of his estate; half, if he had one; if he was childless, the patron inherited everything.

Under the Empire, there was a difference between imperial freedmen

(who enjoyed a number of specific advantages) and the freedmen of individuals. There was also a difference between freedmen and freedwomen. The female manumitted slave remained under the supervision of her patron. As such, she had even less leeway than her male counterpart. In spite of the widespread practice of homosexuality, women were generally more susceptible to sexual violence than men. In some cases, however, this social inferiority offered women a way out: in modest Roman milieus, it was not uncommon for a man to buy a female slave and then to free and marry her.

There were of course manumitted slaves in the countryside. The majority, however, worked and lived in urban centers; as the gravestone inscriptions show, they were very active in commercial trades, the crafts and banking, especially in Italy, and especially at the end of the Republic and the very beginning of the Empire. But in almost all the trades, free men and women worked beside the freedmen and women.

The Trimalchio character in *Satyricon*, as well as one or two passages from Tacitus and certain observations made at Pompeii, tend to insist on the wealth of freedmen, especially those of the Claudio-Julian era—and particularly under Nero. Yet the majority of freedmen were poor or humble. When Pliny the Elder refers to “the plebeian freedmen” (*plebs libertina*), it is not in order to distinguish, by their social rank, a plebeian from an aristocrat, but to convey the fact that most of the freedmen were commoners, people of the cities (Pliny the Elder, 14, 48). Conversely, from the Republican era onward, there were some rare cases of manumitted slaves who “succeeded”: for instance, Demetrius, that freedman from Pompeii who became as rich as his patron and owned a multitude of slaves (Seneca, *On Tranquility of Mind*, 8.6). In Roman times, manu-mission was certainly one of the means of social promotion. Although freed-men did not have the right to become senators or knights, or even, starting with the *Lex Visellia* (24 CE), municipal magistrates, some of their descendants did become members of the elite.

Augustus and his successor Tiberius took steps to limit the number of manu-missions and to react against clandestine or informal manumissions, which had probably become more frequent during the civil wars. The *Lex Aelia Sentia* of 4 CE forbade manumitted slaves under the age of thirty from becoming Roman citizens (Gaius, *The Institutes*, 1.16–19). The same law prohibited the master from manumitting slaves if that manumission could damage his creditors. An owner under the age of twenty was not permitted to manumit a slave except in certain very specific cases (1.37–41). Another law, *Lex*

Fufia Caninia, set limits on the number of slaves that could be granted testamentary manu-mission. The master who had one or two slaves was free to manumit them. But he who owned between two and ten could not manumit more than half; he who had between ten and thirty, up to a third; between thirty and one hundred, up to a quarter. Finally he who had between one hundred and five hundred slaves could only grant testamentary manumission to a fifth. And it was prohibited to exceed one hundred manumissions (1.42–45).

Under Augustus or at the beginning of the reign of Tiberius, the *Lex Junia* established a new category of freedmen, of a lower class: the “Junian Latins.”²⁴ These were former slaves who had been manumitted under the age of thirty or in defiance of the provisions in force (manumitted in private, for instance, in the absence of any magistrate). Their inferiority is particularly apparent with regard to inheritance law: they were not allowed to bequeath their belongings to their children, or to receive inheritances or legacies, or to be appointed testamentary guardians (Gaius, *The Institutes*, 1.22–24). The creation of this category certainly had significant practical consequences, and the number of Junian Latins appears to have been substantial. The use of onomastics with respect to funerary inscriptions makes it impossible to distinguish a Junian Latin from a manumitted Roman citizen: like the latter, the former had the Roman “three-names” (*tria nomina*). But certain indicators—particularly the deceased freed-man’s age—sometimes point to a Junian Latin.²⁵

Various measures taken by the emperors of the Principate progressively increased opportunities for the Junians to become freed citizens. From the moment their status was created, they had the right to become citizens if they married, according to the rules, a woman who was a citizen or a Latin, and had a child who lived for at least one year. Tablets discovered at Herculaneum relate to a certain Lucius Venidius Ennychus, a Junian Latin who, in 62 CE, became a citizen thanks to his one year old daughter.²⁶ From the reign of Tiberius on, Junian Latins who had served for six years in the cohorts of guards in Rome also received this privilege; subsequently the required length of service was reduced to three years (Gaius, *The Institutes*, 1.32a–32b). Under the reign of Claudius, the same advantage was granted to Junians who built a ship with a capacity of at least ten thousand measures of grain (*modii*) and who, for six years, used that ship to transport grain to Rome (1.32c). Nero extended the authorization to Junians who had a property worth at least two hundred thousand sesterces and who built a house in Rome; finally, Trajan added to this group those who ran a large milling-baking business in Rome (1.33–34).

The Junians were not the only intermediate category between

citizen freed-men and slaves. Many former slaves were classified as *dediticii*. These *dediticii* could not aspire to become either Latins or citizens; they were prohibited from writing a testament or inheriting. They had been manumitted, but prior to that, when they were slaves, they had been severely punished or had behaved disgracefully. The juriconsult Gaius lists the categories of those who became *dediticii*: “slaves who have been placed in chains by their masters, or have been branded, or have been subjected to torture for some offense and convicted,” as well as some gladiator and bestiary slaves, and some imprisoned slaves (Gaius, *The Institutes*, 1.13).

Latin Junians and *dediticii* bear witness to the complex hierarchy of statuses. The brutal and massive reality of slavery is somewhat obscured by these partially intermediate categories and by these half-open doors, which offered the slaves (or at least some of them) a real possibility of attaining freedom and citizenship. The measures taken by Augustus neither aimed at nor resulted in suppressing manumission or rendering it insignificant. But they increased its codification and set up new obstacles, in order to avoid seemingly lax practices. The remainder of the Principate, witnessed an easing rather than an aggravation of these obstacles. But the social reality of manumission obviously depended on the economic sectors involved, the social milieus, and the behavior of masters and slaves.

It is very difficult to know how the slaves imagined their servile past and their liberation, for those former slaves who subsequently became authors say nothing about it. Nor do the characters in the works of Terence, Phaedrus, and Epictetus. Except for some funerary inscriptions, including a poem in honor of the deceased, very few literary works present information on the subject. In fact, one of the only such works is *Satyricon*, a satirical work that caricatures its subjects. The freedmen probably talked about it much more among themselves than with free men; in fact, during a meal, the guests of Trimalchio, all or most of whom are freedmen, readily broach the subject. They do not appear to be ashamed of their slave pasts; they look at it as an ordeal and as bad luck that, unfortunately, can befall anyone. At the entrance to Trimalchio’s dining room, the walls are decorated with paintings that recount the host’s servile life, without seeking to conceal it: “the painstaking artist had given a faithful picture of his whole career with explanations.”²⁷ This attitude was probably widespread: on a stele honoring a freedman in Amphipolis in Thrace, one of the decorative spaces devoted to wine-growing most probably illustrates the servile work of the young Timotheos, before he became Aulus Caprius Timotheos, freedman and slave merchant (*somatemporos*).²⁸

In a sense, the slave earns his manumission: Trimalchio, for

instance, did all he could in order to be freed, and he succeeded. The table companions of *Satyricon* also attribute much to luck: bad luck leads to slavery and good luck to manumission. Unlike slaves, freedmen are not rebels: "They do not question their position, rather they try to feel at ease in it."²⁹ But, like some *ingenui*, they consider slavery to be a contingent fact, rather than something natural; they could have *not* been slaves. Therefore, once they have been manumitted, it does not seem theoretically impossible to them that they become masters and in turn own slaves.

7 SLAVERY AT THE END OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE

The Later Roman Empire: Still a Slave Society?

In the Middle Ages slavery continued to exist in Western Europe, but it was less central than under the Roman Principate. Medieval societies cannot be called slave societies. When, then, did slavery lose its social and economic importance?

There are those who think that the “slave” period ended as early as the second century CE or, at the latest, at the beginning of the third. This is the position of several Marxist-inspired Italian archeologists, particularly Andrea Carandini.¹ These people believe that during the Principate, the Italian economy was in a recession and that the Empire experienced a general crisis, which was also, in their eyes, a crisis of the “slave mode of production.” In Chapter 4 we took a position on this notion and on the conditions under which we agreed to use it. But should one generalize the signs of a recession or of a crisis in this or that sector to the entire social and economic life of a region? It is true that under the Principate, Tyrrhenian central Italy lost influence, and that its economic activities diminished. But a crisis in Tyrrhenian Italy is not tantamount to a crisis in the whole of the Empire, even if Rome remains the capital of that region. Furthermore, one does not really observe an increase in the price of slaves between the first and third centuries CE; this relative price stability is not consistent with a scarcity of servile labor.²

Other historians believe that the practice of slavery did not decrease noticeably under the Empire, at least not until the beginning of the fifth century. In this regard, they see fundamental continuity between the Principate and the fourth century. Finally, Marc Bloch defended an original thesis that is hardly ever espoused by historians of Rome, although it is not refuted: in the second and third centuries of our era, the number of slaves dropped, and then increased again. Starting in the fourth century, because of the wars with the barbarians, the West experienced a second flourishing of slavery. It is only in the middle of the High Middle Ages, during the eighth or ninth century, that, according to Bloch, slavery lost much of its importance.³

There is some truth to the second and third of these theses. Under the Empire, Italy did not have as many slaves as it had had previously; in other regions, on the contrary, their numbers probably increased. If

the total population of the Empire, under Augustus, was approximately sixty million inhabitants, the number of slaves, we think, reached about ten million. This figure probably dropped considerably between one hundred and three hundred CE. It is, however, not possible to establish a precise date at which Roman society ceased to be a “slave” society.⁴ The change took place in the following centuries. We will not examine here the manner in which the arrival of the Germanic peoples modified slavery. But, in any event, one should not imagine a brutal upheaval around the year one thousand! Indeed, we do not believe that up until that time the number of slaves remained very significant, and then declined. Rather than a rupture, there was a progressive evolution: begun in the third and fourth centuries, it picked up speed after the end of the Western Roman Empire, but well before the ninth and tenth centuries.⁵ As to feudalism, it arose later still. In the fourth century CE, Rome remained, in our opinion, a slave society.

How many slaves were there at the time? We do not know. Fewer than under Augustus. And their distribution was not the same as at the beginning of the Empire. In Ancient times, the largest number of slaves could generally be found in the dominant and most prosperous regions—those regions from which the other commodities of big merchants came: Italy in the second and first centuries BCE; the eastern parts of the Empire in the fourth century CE. Finally, in the High Middle Ages, during the first centuries of Islam, slaves went instead to the Byzantine Empire and the Muslim world.

Slaves and *Coloni* in Agriculture

Were some slaves farmers in the fourth century? Yes. Farmer slaves are attested throughout the history of the Empire. In about 160 CE, in Oea (Tripolitania), the rich Pudentilla, wife of Apuleius, gave her sons land, livestock, agricultural produce (wheat, barley, etc.), and four hundred slaves, some of whom were surely farmers and shepherds (Apuleius, *Apologia*, 93.3–4). A century later, Emperor Aurelian (270–275 CE) planned to buy land along the Aurelian Way, from coastal Etruria to Liguria, and to settle prisoners there as slaves, in order to cultivate vineyards whose wine would be distributed freely in Rome. But he did not have the time to realize this project (*Historia Augusta*, *Aurelian*, 48). In about 280 CE, the usurper Proculus armed two thousand slaves of his own (*Historia Augusta*, *Firmus*, 12.1). Are these figures accurate? Maybe not, but they seemed plausible to those who wrote the biographies of the *Historia Augusta*.

In the fourth century, the number of attestations of farmer or shepherd slaves tends to increase again. According to John Chrysostom, the wealthy of Antioch often owned one or two thousand slaves (*Homilia in Matthaeum* 63.4). Many livestock herders were slaves; they lived on horseback, and were often dangerous raiders (*Theodosian Code* 9.30.2). The steward, the *actor*, who managed the large estate in the master's name, was also often a slave (Palladius, 1, 6; and *Theodosian Code* 12.1.6). Toward the end of the century, Saint Melania owned, near the Strait in Sicily, a magnificent property that supplied the incomes of sixteen country estates (*villae*), which were cultivated by four hundred slaves (*Vita Melaniae* 18). Allusions to farm slaves are also found in Symmachus and Saint Augustine.

The real change was in the way slave labor was put to use. Almost no texts speak of rural slaves working in teams. The word *mancipia*, which then and in following centuries seems to refer to plantation slaves working in teams, appears in only one fourth-century text (*Theodosian Code* 9.42.7, year 369). From this time on many agricultural slaves were *coloni*: they were given a plot of land that they cultivated with their families. Such *coloni* slaves existed already in the Republican period and under the Principate, but their numbers increased considerably in the fourth century. Was this evolution beneficial for the slaves? Yes, from a certain point of view. As A. Piganiol wrote: "construction of the individual house of the peasant represents important progress, succeeding, as it does, the slave barracks."⁶ But the *colonus* still has to be able to feed himself and his family ...

So, then, what differences still existed between slaves and *coloni*, these peasants who were free, in principle, and who gave a part of their crop to the landowner? Or between slaves and *humiliores* (that is, the plebeian element of the free population)? The question proves to be all the more tricky since there is no real consensus on the characteristics of the *coloni* status in the fourth century.⁷

In fact, the status and situation of agricultural slaves and that of *coloni* appear from this time to be less distinct. In a constitution from 325 CE regarding certain Sardinian lands, Constantine recommends keeping the slaves on the large domains that they cultivate (*Theodosian Code* 2.25.1).⁸ According to some, this measure was inspired by Christianity; others believe that it was the result of a general change of attitudes or that it met primarily social and economic goals. Whatever the motivations, the effect of the measure was to strengthen the ties that bound the slave to the land, to the detriment of those that continued to attach him to his master. Starting in 371, it was forbidden to sell rural slaves without the lands they

worked (*Justinian Code* 11.48.7).

Therefore various texts, some of them even prescriptive, compare the status and the fate of the *coloni* to that of the slaves. Still unthinkable under the Principate, a law promulgated in 332 CE stipulates that “the *colonus* who contemplates flight must be chained like a slave so as to be forced, by the effect of a slave sentence, to fulfill the obligations of the free.”⁹ This provision translates the lawmaker’s eagerness to account for new situations that, without abolishing the fundamental difference between slavery and liberty, partially mitigate that difference, for fiscal reasons in particular.¹⁰

Thus despite these new formulations, the fundamental difference between slave and free remains valid; it is therefore impossible to confuse fourth-century slaves with *coloni*. Nor can one conclude that the fate of slaves improved. Egypt has made available some thirty papyri regarding female slaves working as domestics; passed on as part of an estate or of a dowry, used as loan guarantees, they were shunted around from one master to another and seemed doomed, from mother to daughter, to a life of slavery.¹¹

Even the upper echelons of society were affected by this partial blurring of statuses, which seemed a little less clear-cut than before although they were not abolished. Following the third-century crisis of the Empire, there was at the end of the century a multiplication of cases that, until then, had been much less frequent: freedmen who became municipal magistrates, or town council-ors and magistrates who lived in concubinage with slaves.¹² More than a wish to establish Christian-inspired legislation, the reign of Constantine probably reveals an effort to react against this confusion and to reestablish a more rigid social order. But was this effort successful?

Recruiting New Slaves

The sources of slave supply remained more or less unchanged. The spreading of Christianity, however, certainly led to a significant decrease in the exposure of children, to which the Christians were resolutely opposed: Lactancius condemned it in forceful terms (*Divine Institutes* 6.20.18–25). Those of the exposed children who did not die were usually enslaved.

In the third and fourth centuries, the recruitment of new slaves was also influenced by the military situation. The number of Romans captured by the enemy increased substantially. Once they had been freed, what status should be given to these Roman citizens who had been enslaved by the barbarians? In principle, their rights were restored (*postliminio restituti*), provided that they had not voluntarily

followed the barbarians.

The number of enemies captured in war by the Romans must also have increased. Yet these barbarian prisoners were not all enslaved. Under Marcus Aurelius, for the first time, Marcomanic prisoners were settled in the Empire with their families as *coloni*, to cultivate land they did not own. Some were settled in Dacia, others in Pannonia, in Moesia, in Germania, indeed in Italy, in the region of Ravenna. But those who were settled in Italy revolted, and Marcus Aurelius decided to stop sending any to the peninsula.¹³ This way of settling barbarians in the Empire in order to use them as *coloni* and soldiers rather than enslaving them was adopted again several times in the second half of the third century, and then in the fourth. According to the Panegyric of Constantius Chlorus, delivered at Treirs on March 1, 297, Emperor Constantius Chlorus has shortly before received the submissions of Chamavi and the Frisians; rather than enslaving them, he sent them, with their wives, children, and belongings, to deserted lands in the north of Gaul: to the Ambiani, the Bellovaces, the Tricasses, and the Lingones.

In all the porticos of our cities sit captive bands of barbarians, the men quaking, their savagery utterly confounded, old women and wives contemplating the listlessness of their sons and husbands, [...] and all these parceled out to the inhabitants of your province for service, until they might be led out to the desolate lands assigned to be cultivated by them.¹⁴

Conversely, the recruitment of slaves within the borders of the Empire most probably did not decrease. It may have even increased, especially when imperial power was particularly fragile. Saint Augustine echoes a situation of that sort in a letter dated 422–423, the beginning of the last decade of Roman Africa. In this document—the most beautiful and enlightening we have about the sources of slavery in the Roman world—Augustine denounces the slave trafficking that was rife at the time:

There is in Africa such a great multitude of men who are commonly called slave merchants that they seem to drain this land to a large extent of its human population by

transferring those whom they buy—almost all of them free men—to the provinces overseas. For scarcely a few are found to have been sold by their parents, and they do not buy these, as the laws of Rome allow, for work lasting twenty-five years, but they buy them precisely as slaves and sell them overseas as slaves. But only rarely do they buy true slaves from their masters. Now from this multitude of merchants a multitude of trappers and raiders has grown so great that I reported that they invade certain remote and rural sites, where the population is small [...] and they sell to these merchants those whom they carry off by violence.

[...] When, however, I myself asked a certain girl from among those who, through our church, were set free from this wretched captivity how she was sold to the slave merchants, she said that she was seized from her parents' house. Then I asked whether she was the only one who had been there, and she answered that this happened when her parents and brothers were present. Her brother, who had come to take her back, was also there, and, because she was little, he explained how it had come about. He said that these raiders had broken in at night and that the family hid themselves from them as best they could rather than venture to resist them, since they believed that they were barbarians. But if there were no slave merchants, those things would not happen.¹⁵

Probably these slave merchants were secretly protected by notables, who let them engage in illegal activities. While parents were allowed to rent out the labor of their children for twenty-five years, without legally infringing on the inalienability of the latter's freedom, they were not allowed to sell them as slaves on a permanent basis. Some parents did so anyway, however; and while there was a legal distinction between permanent rental and slavery, in practice the statuses were quite easily confused. Moreover, according to Augustine, these slave merchants were supplied by raiders, plunderers, who

kidnapped children and adults. Their unfortunate victims were taken as slaves to other regions, on the other side of the sea—we do not know exactly where. It seems that in Europe, the barbarian clientele prized these slaves.

Augustine's letter tells us, then, how the illegal enslavement of free men and women of the Empire was practiced. Similar events must have occurred throughout the various periods of Roman domination. Consequently, the *Justinian Code* compiled sixteen laws or imperial rescripts issued between the reigns of Caracalla and Constantine. This legislation was very harsh: the usual punishment for those who kidnapped children in order to sell them was forced labor in the mines for life. But the decline of the Western Empire at the beginning of the fifth century no doubt helps to explain the scale of the kidnappings and trafficking described by Augustine. As he himself says, these evils only increased since the time of the Praetorian Prefect Hadrianus, at the very beginning of the fifth century. And, some years after that letter, the Vandals became the masters of Roman Africa.¹⁶

Bishop Augustine's concern with fighting these abuses that scandalized him and with enforcing the law is very representative of the ecclesiastical hierarchy's active intervention in this area. This must be taken into account when we ask ourselves about the Church's attitude toward slavery.

Privileged Slaves and Escape from Slavery

The slave's activities remained more or less the same between the beginning of the Empire and the fourth century. The household staff was made up of slaves throughout the entire period. Commerce and industry also continued to employ a slave workforce, although probably less so than previously; in any case, slaves and freedmen were much less visible in these sectors than at the beginning of the Empire.

In the fourth century there were still public slaves who belonged to the cities and were charged with their administration. In the investigation and trial of Bishop Felix, for instance, accused in 314–315 of having handed the Holy Scriptures over to the persecution of Diocletian, mention is made of a public slave from the city of Abthugni, named Solo or Solus.¹⁷

On the other hand, the role of slaves and freedmen in the imperial administration diminished starting in the second century. But it was around the middle of the third century, probably under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus (253–268), that a major change occurred: imperial slaves and freedmen stop participating in the administration.

Gerard Boulvert has attributed the change to the increasingly military character of the administrative hierarchy. A good number of slaves continued to belong to the emperor, but they were domestics or farmers; employees of the administration were no longer among them.¹⁸ These slaves still enjoyed certain privileges, and were even granted new ones. Starting in 320 CE, a constitution exempted them from application of the *Senatus Consultum Claudianum*. According to this *senatus-consultum* of 52 CE, a free woman who lived together with someone else's slave risked becoming the slave of her partner's master, while her children would also be born slaves. Far from relaxing these measures, the Constantinian era tightened them if the lover of a free woman was the slave of a private individual. By contrast, starting in 320, women who lived with slaves of the emperor were exempt from such sanctions: they remained free and their children were not slaves, but rather Junian Latins, that is, lower-ranking freedmen (*Theodosian Code* 4.12.3).¹⁹ These measures were confirmed by Emperor Julian.

In the third and fourth centuries there were no slave revolts. Neither the Bagaudae of Gaul nor the Circumcellions of North Africa can be considered slaves. Of course, running away and escape continued, as is proven by allusions that we find in several of Augustine's works (for instance *In Johannis Evangelium tractatus* 41.4, or *Enarratio in psalmos* 138.60). Moreover, all or most of the collars that runaway slaves seem to have worn date from the fourth century.²⁰ An imperial constitution—which, based on the name of the addressee, a certain Probus, probably dates back to the beginning of the fourth century—provides for serious and cruel punishments (the amputation of a foot, forced labor in the mines) of fugitive slaves who were arrested when crossing the border on their way to barbarian territories (*Justinian Code* 6.1.3). And several of Constantine's constitutions provide for sanctions against free men who helped runaway slaves belonging to other owners and who welcomed them in their homes (*Theodosian Code* 4.9.1 and *Justinian Code* 6.1.4 and 6). In most cases, moreover, the guilty parties sought less to free these fugitives than to illegally appropriate them for themselves ...

The reign of Constantine was also marked by an important novelty with respect to manumission: the creation in 321 of a new procedure, manumission in a church. The master who wanted to manumit one of his slaves brought him into the church. He read the act of manumission and destroyed the tablets that testified to the ownership of the slave. A manumission of this sort had to take place in the presence of a bishop, who fulfilled the role of the magistrate. Constantine specifies that slaves who were manumitted in this manner received *ipso facto* Roman citizenship, which the bishop, in lieu of the

qualified magistrate, was authorized to confer. Were slaves who were freed in this manner baptized at the same time? It seems that the two ceremonies were not formally linked. But probably slaves who were emancipated in church were either already baptized or willing to be baptized in the near future.[21](#)

Slavery Puts the Church and Christians to the Test

There was a time when historiography spoke very highly of Church policy regarding slavery. At present, the opposite is true: most historians readily stress the fact that the Church and Christians did nothing to combat slavery and that they exploited their slaves at least as much as pagans did.

Let us try not to fall either into clericalism or into lay or antireligious sectarianism. It is true that the Church and Christians did not fight for the abolition of slavery. But is that surprising? Is it an inconsistency or a weakness? We think not. Christ never wanted to engage in social or political conflict. He did not intervene in the struggle between Israel and the Romans; and although he addressed issues of wealth and poverty, he never advocated equality of wealth. He carried out his ministry within the framework of existing social and political categories, without seeking to subvert them. His attitude toward slavery was not different. This does not mean that Christians were not encouraged to free their own slaves if they were prepared to, just as they were encouraged to give money to the poor.

To be sure, slavery was considered the opposite of freedom and a particularly demeaning fate; but at the same time it constituted one of the social conditions that were deemed inevitable. Slaves had a certain kind of place in society, they were not only material goods, nor the opposite of the free human being. This ambiguity of the slave condition only deepened over the centuries, as the freedom of free people became less and less political and more and more problematic.[22](#) The philosophical truths of the Greek city remained very present—and were to remain so for many centuries to come—but daily life and the ideologies to which it gave rise were increasingly removed from those of archaic or classical Athens.

It is not easy to evaluate the role of the Church and of the measures that it defended. How did it influence imperial policy? Which of Constantine's decisions were inspired by the Christians? Which were meant to comply with Church policy? Constantine was an emperor, not a bishop, and many of the measures he took had no religious objectives. Thus the exemption of imperial slaves and their partners

from the application of the *Senatus Consultus Claudianum* had the effect of creating a number of stable families, which were spared the constraints of slavery; however, the reason for the decision had nothing to do with Christianity, for otherwise it would have affected all slaves, and not just the imperial ones. Another example: in 326, Constantine prohibited tutors and curators from selling the urban slaves of their ward, so that the latter could watch over the ward (*Justinian Code* 5.37.22.2–4).²³ Was this measure, which aimed at protecting the interests of the ward, Christian-inspired? Probably not.

Some of the emperor's decisions were meant to protect Christian slaves from masters of other religions. They were probably suggested by the Church or by Christian members of the elite. For instance, in 335 CE, Constantine prohibited Jews from circumcising their non-Jewish slaves (*Theodosian Code* 16.8.5 and 16.9.9).

The influence of the Church with regard to sexual and family morality is not insignificant. We have already spoken of the exposure of children, to which Christians were very much opposed. It is obvious that not all Christians followed the precepts of the Church and that often neither the faithful nor the ecclesiastics completely renounced the biases of their traditional education. But, with respect to unions between women of high descent and men of lowly descent, at least some Christians espoused positions that were clearly more egalitarian than those supported by Roman tradition. Christian thought did not limit itself to emphasizing the equality of men and women before God; it also strove to teach the same sexual morality to men and to women, something which could have a much more practical effect.

Roman tradition was very liberal with respect to men's sexual relations in general, and particularly men of the elite, and strict with respect to women's, especially women of the elite. In the eyes of Christians, by contrast, the same rule must, in principle, apply to everybody. For instance, Pope Callistus (217–222) decided that a woman of rank who found no partner in her milieu could, without going against Christian morality, marry a man of more humble means, be he free or a slave, on the condition that their relationship was permanent and monogamous. If the man was a slave, Roman law did not officially recognize the marriage, but the Church did not condemn the union.

It is true that Callistus was a freedman. Hippolytus, his rival and adversary, who was more influenced by customary social prejudices, did not approve of this decision. But he himself considered that a slave woman married to a free man, to whom she remained faithful and whose children she raised, was acting in a Christian manner. This position was, in fact, widespread in the Church. As the canons of Basil

of Caesarea, the texts of the Council of Toledo (400 CE), and those of Augustine prove, a permanent and monogamous union between a female slave and a free man was not considered reprehensible from a Christian perspective—provided that the slave’s master consented. Conversely, it was morally reprehensible for a young man from a good family to have a slave mistress while waiting to marry a young woman of his standing, or for a married man to have a mistress in his home (whereas Roman tradition sometimes accepted such practices). For some of the Church Fathers, the principle was simple: as long as the union was permanent and monogamous, it was not condemned, even if it was not sanctioned by a marriage according to Roman law.²⁴

Although it was very concerned with legality, the Church of that period did not adhere to the ideas and behavior of the political and social elite as much as it would later on. Its position was indisputably supportive of slaves, particularly of female slaves—even if the Church did not fight for the abolition of slavery. These leanings toward some level of egalitarianism were not necessarily limited to Christian circles. Furthermore, as the official weight of the Church grew, the influence of social prejudices within it became increasingly perceptible. At the end of the fourth century, Saint Jerome criticized women of high birth who were in a couple with a slave, and it is clear that he found such behavior more reprehensible in a woman than in a man. Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom also make a clear distinction between two types of behavior: that which one can require of women of high birth and that which is adapted to slave women. For instance, the latter may go to the market alone (provided their master agrees), whereas the former may not.²⁵ At that same time, Paulinus of Pella, grandson of Ausonius, was only interested in the charms of young slaves during his adolescence. Then his parents convinced him to marry. He congratulated himself afterwards for having limited his desires to affairs with slaves, which saved him from adultery (for a man, sexual relations with a slave were not legally adulterous) and the birth of bastard slaves (he had one, who died very young) (Paulinus, *Eucharisticos*, 159–72). Sidonius Apollinaris, for his part, speaks of a man who, after having had an affair with a slave, remembered “his patrimony, his posterity and his reputation,” and left the slave to marry a rich young girl from a good family. The Christian beliefs of these men clearly did not keep them from seeking pleasure and money, nor from being sensitive to lineage and social prestige. In the middle of the fifth century, Salvian of Marseille, who was a strict moralist, stigmatized men who, in addition to a marriage that was honorable and flattering to their reputation, kept mistresses; slaves, he wrote, do not have troops of mistresses (*De gubernatione Dei* 4, 22–23)!

Thus, even with respect to family and marriage, the doctrine of the Church and of Christians was not consistent. It did not disrupt everything, far from it. But it did mitigate some of the most negative aspects of slavery, fighting against the more blatant abuses. It was particularly interested in the ransoming of prisoners and was opposed to enslavement, through trickery or force, of free men and women.

Its influence thus contributed to organizing a place for slaves in the social kaleidoscope. The fate of the slave was held to be the opposite of freedom and even of humanity; the slave was considered a stranger to human society. But, in practice, by the very fact of his existence and of the legislation to which he gave rise, he had long since acquired a *de facto* place in the city and the Empire. Nonetheless, his fate often proved to be very harsh. We do not write this in order to “restore slavery to favor”; far from us to suggest such a thing! But it is inevitable that these men and women who, in certain regions and in certain periods, constituted 30 or 35 percent of the entire population, were treated as more than simple objects. The Christians contributed to ensuring them that place in Roman society; with their own concerns, they reinforced developments that were already perceptible before Christian influence became dominant.

Despite the changes and various official measures, slavery in the fourth century CE was no different from that of the preceding centuries. In this respect, Greco-Roman tradition formed a whole. The differences between Greece and Rome, which we have sought to analyze, did not prevent solid continuity: Greek ideas were adopted and repeated in one way or another throughout the centuries of the Roman Empire. This is why we thought it reasonable to study together the slaves of the Greek world (archaic, classical, Hellenistic) and those of the Roman world. In the last centuries of the Western Empire, Christians, who in other respects were strongly influenced by Jewish tradition, were part of this continuity, while shifting its emphasis. It is during the High Middle Ages that more significant changes took place and that Western Europe abandoned the slave society for good.

NOTES

Abbreviations

CIL: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin.

FgrH: F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischer Historiker*, Leyde, 1923–1930.

IG: *Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin.

*IG I*³: Attican Inscriptions before 403–402.

*IG II/III*²: Attican Inscriptions after 403–402.

ILS: *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, par H. Dessau, Berlin, 1892–1906.

MAMA: *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*, 1928–1962.

OGI: W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones selectae*, Leipzig, 1903–1905.

SEG: *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Amsterdam.

Introduction

1. M. Lengellé-Tardy, *L'Esclavage moderne* (Paris: PUF, coll. “Que sais-je?” 1999).

2. In one of his *Homilies*, toward the end of the fourth century CE, Gregory of Nyssa develops an argument that should lead him to call for the abolition of slavery; but he does not, nor does he demand of Christians that they free their slaves. This homily is, nonetheless, the ancient text that is the most favorable to abolition (on this subject see Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]).

3. For Rome, see C. Nicolet, ed., *La Mémoire perdue: A la recherche des archives oubliées, publiques et privées, de la Rome antique* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994), and

C. Moatti, ed., *La Mémoire perdue: Recherches sur l'administration romaine* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1998).

4. See Alessandro Stella, *Histoires d'esclaves dans la péninsule ibérique* (Paris: EHESS, 2000).

5. See, for example, J. W. Blassingame, “Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,” *Journal of Southern History* 41 (1975): 473–92; and *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); *The Autobiography of William Sanders Scarborough: An American Journey from Slavery to Scholarship*, ed., intro. M. V. Ronnick (Detroit: Wayne

State University Press, 2005).

6. The expression comes from Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

Chapter 1. What Is a Slave?

1. Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, trans. C. H. Oldfather, vol. 2, *Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1935), 39.5.

2. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists, or, Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1957), 6.264c.

3. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. W. Blanco (New York and London: Norton Critical Edition, 1998), 8.40.

4. Athenaeus, *Banquet of the Learned*, 6.265 b–c.

5. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, trans. F. C. Conybeare (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1912), 8.7.12.

6. This latter and eminently Marxist notion, which was much debated during the 1970s, both in history and in anthropology, has since fallen into oblivion.

7. For this metaphorical use of the term “slavery,” see, for example, *Texte, politique, idéologie: Cicéron*, ed. P. Lévêque and M. Clavel-Lévêque (Besançon and Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976).

Chapter 2. The Earliest Forms of Slavery

1. J.-P. Olivier, “Des extraits de contrats de ventes d’esclaves dans les tablettes de Cnossos,” in *Studies J. Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1987), 479–98.

2. Quotations from Homer are from *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996) and *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990).

3. E. Benvéniste has pointed out that in Indo-European languages, the meanings of buying and of freeing are related. For example, he establishes a link between the Gothic *bugjan*, “to buy,” and the Avestan Iranian *baog*—which means “to resolve,” “to set free.” “One must imagine,” he writes, “that the slave’s condition only becomes normal, so to speak, once he has been bought” (see E. Benvéniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* [Paris: Minuit, 1969]: 1:137).

4. There are, however, some exceptions to this custom: see, for example, *Odyssey* 17.178–99 and 240–53; 20.149–56; 22.431–34.

5. Eumeus is speaking to Eurycleia (*Odyssey* 21.381–85); Dolius to the mother of his children (*Odyssey* 24.389–90)

6. See the example of young Phoenix in *Iliad* 9.447–57.

7. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists, or, Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 7 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1957), 15.695f–696a. We find this idea in all aristocratic societies. The Jawara of Kingi, in Sahelian Mali, said the same thing: “Our hoe is our rifle.”

8. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, trans. Anonymous, in *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, with an English translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1914), 122–31.

9. Athenaeus, *Banquet of the Learned*, 6.265b–c.

10. At the battle of Plataea, in 479—a time when the population of Sparta was primarily civilian—there were seven Helots for every Spartan fighter. Let us recall that the dependents of Sparta, the Helots, were not, strictly speaking, slaves; but Thucydides treats them as such by way of comparison.

11. Y. Vinogradov, “The Greek Colonisation of the Black Sea Region in the Light of Private Lead Letters,” in G. R. Tsetschladze, *The Greek Colonisation of the Black Sea Area: Historical Interpretation of Archeology* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), 161.

12. A. S. Rusjaeva and J. G. Vinogradov, “Der ‘Brief des Priesters’ aus Hylaia,” in R. Rolle, M. Muller-Wille, and K. Schietzer, eds., *Gold der Steppe* (Schleswig, 1993), 201–2.

13. Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, trans. H. Rackham, vol. 20, *Aristotle in 23 Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1952), 12.4.

14. See Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1980).

15. I. Morris, “Hard Surfaces,” in P. Cartledge, E. E. Cohen, and L. Foxhall, eds., *Money, Labor and Land: Approaches to the Economies of Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 29.

16. Hyperides, *Against Athenogenes*, trans. J. O. Burtt, vol. 2, *Minor Attic Orators* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1962), 22.

17. See A. Schiavone, ed., *Storia di Roma*, vol. 1, *Roma in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988); A. Grandazzi, *La fondation de Rome, réflexion sur l'Histoire* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991); *Les origines de Rome* (Paris: PUF, coll. “Que sais-je?,” 2003); and T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars, c. 1000–264 B.C.* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

18. On these passages from Dionysius, see E. Gabba, “Studi su Dionigi di Alicarnasso,” 1 and 2, *Athenaeum* 38 (1960): 175–225 and 39 (1961): 98–121; E. Gabba, *Dionigi e la storia di Roma arcaica* (Bari: Edipuglia 1996); G. Poma, “Schiavi e schiavitù in Dionigi di Alicarnasso,” *Rivista Storica dell’Antichità* 11 (1981): 69–97; Alfredina Storchi Marino, “Schiavitù e forme di dipendenza in Roma arcaica, Alcune considerazioni,” in M. Moggi and G. Cordiano, eds., *Schiavi e dipendenti nell’ambito dell’oikos e della familia* (Pisa: ETS, 1997), 183–212.

19. Livy (1.39.5–6) does not share this opinion, since he does not believe that Servius Tullius was a slave by birth, nor that his mother had been enslaved. He explains that she had been the wife of the leading citizen of Corniculum and that she was taken prisoner after a battle in which her husband was killed; but, because of her rank, she was not enslaved.

20. Francesco De Martino, “Intorno all’origine della schiavitù a Roma,” *Labeo* 20 (1974): 163–93; republished in Francesco De Martino, *Diritto e società nell’antica Roma* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1979), 130–61.

21. The most recent studies on Etruscan dependents are: Mario Torelli, “Tre studi di storia etrusca,” *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 8 (1974–75): 3–78, and “Pour une histoire de l’esclavage en Etrurie,” in *Actes du colloque 1973 sur l’esclavage* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976), 101–13; E. Benelli, “Sui cosiddetti penesti etruschi,” *Parola del Passato* 51 (1996): 335–44, and “L’onomastica etrusca di Perugia: alcune osservazioni,” *Analisi della Fondazione per il Museo Claudio Faina* 9 (2002): 517–24; F.-H. Massa Pairault, “La struttura sociale e la questione dei servi,” in Mario Torelli, ed., *Gli Etruschi* (Venice: Bompiani, 2000), 255–71; C. Berrendonner, “Les porteurs de Vornamengentilizia a Pérouse,” *Revue de philology* 75 (2001): 199–237.

22. See Maria Capozza, *Movimenti servile nel mondo romano età repubblicana*, vol. 1, *Dal 501 al 184 a. C.* (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1966). The texts relating to these events are: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 5.50–57, 10.9–16, and 12, frag. 6.6; Livy, 3.10–18 and 4.45.

23. M. H. Crawford, ed., *Roman Statutes* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1996), 2:555–723. See also S. Riccobono et al., *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani (F.I.R.A.)*, vol. 1, *Leges* (Florence: G. Barbera, 1940), 21–75 (2nd ed., 1968); Alan Watson, *Rome of the Twelve Tables: Persons and Property* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16–19.

24. Regarding Vindicius, see also Plutarch, *Publicola*, 7.7.

25. Cicero himself, who memorized the Twelve Tables at school,

tends to think that testamentary manumission is the most recent of the three forms of manumission (*Topics*, 2.10 and *De Legibus*, 2.59). On this subject, see Georges Fabre, *Libertus, patrons et affranchise à Rome* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1981), 5–36.

26. M. Kaser, *Romisches Privatrecht*, 2nd ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1971), 1:101–2.

27. Storch Marino, “Schiavitu e forme di dipendenza in Roma arcaica, Alcune considerazioni,” 189–92; see also Gabba, “Studi su Dionigi di Alicarnasso,” 1 and 2, and *Dionigi e la storia di Roma arcaica*.

28. See Poma, “Schiavi e schiavitu in Dionigi di Alicarnasso,” 74–76.

29. See Mario Torelli, “Pour une histoire de l’esclavage en Etrurie,” in *Actes du colloque 1973 sur l’esclavage*, 102–4 (there are, for example, slave “signatures” on the painted graves of Tarquinia).

30. Henri Lévy-Bruhl, “Théorie de l’esclavage,” in *Quelques problèmes du très ancien droit romain* (Paris: Domat-Montchrestien, 1934), 17.

31. See Storch Marino, “Schiavitu e forme di dipendenza in Roma arcaica, Alcune considerazioni,” 197–202.

32. Lévy-Bruhl, “Théorie de l’esclavage.”

33. For more details on this point, see for example, Moses I. Finley, “La servitude pour dettes,” *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 43 (1965): 159–84; Francesco De Martino, “Riforme del IV secolo a. C.,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto di Diritto Romano* 78 (1975): 29–70 (republished in De Martino, *Diritto e società nell’antica Roma*, 183–224); Poma, “Schiavi e schiavitu in Dionigi di Alicarnasso,” 83–87; and Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*.

34. Dionysius does not use the word *nexum*, nor does he use the Greek word that could be the equivalent. He uses paraphrases such as “those who had been enslaved for debt” (16.5.4).

Chapter 3. A Slave Population

1. In 413, the Spartan army began occupying the fort at Decelea in Attica, causing a gradual decline of mining activities.

2. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists, or, Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1957), 6.272c.

3. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham, vol. 21, *Aristotle in 23 Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1944), 7.1325b–1326a.

4. Aristotle, *Economics*, trans. G. C. Armstrong, vol. 18, *Aristotle in 23 Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1935), 1.1, 1.6.

5. Athenaeus, *Banquet of the Learned*, 6.267e.
6. Hyperides, *Against Aristogiton*, trans. J. O. Burtt, vol. 2, *Minor Attic Orators* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1962), frag. 18.
7. Lysias, *For Callias*, trans. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1930), 5.5
8. Lysias, *On the Refusal of a Pension*, trans. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1930), 24.6.
9. See Henri Wallon, *Histoire de l'esclavage dans l'Antiquité*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1879).
10. Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History of Pliny*, trans. J. Bostock and H. T. Riley (London, 1855), 37.77.
11. The highest percentage—40 percent of the population—is suggested by P. A. Brunt (*Italian Manpower, 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971]) and by Keith Hopkins (*Conquerors and Slaves* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978]). J. Beloch proposes 33 percent (*Die Bevölkerung des griechisch-römischen Welt* [Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1886]), while Jean-Christian Dumont believes it to be “at least a third” (*Servus, Rome et l'esclavage sous la République* [Rome : Ecole Française de Rome, 1987]).
12. E. Lo Cascio, “The size of the Roman population: Beloch and the meaning of the Augustan census figures,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 23–40; and “La dinamica della popolazione in Italia da Augusto al III° secolo,” in *L'Italie d'Auguste à Dioclétien: Actes du colloque international (Rome, 25–28 mars 1992)* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1994), 91–125; W. Scheidel, “The Slave Population of Roman Italy: Speculations and Constraints,” *Topoi* 9 (1999): 129–44; J. Cels Saint-Hilaire, “Citoyens romains, esclaves et affranchise: Problèmes de démographie,” *Revue des études anciennes* 103 (2001): 443–79.
13. J. Cels Saint-Hilaire, “Les *libertini*: Des mots et des choses,” *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 11 (1985): 331–79; and “Citoyenneté et droit de vote: A propos du procès des Scipions,” in C. Bruun, ed., *The Roman Middle Republic: Politics, Religion and Historiography, c. 400–133 B.C.*, *Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae* 23 (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2000), 177–94; and “Le Sens du mot *libertinus*: Quelques réflexions,” *Latomus* 61 (2002): 285–94.
14. See P. Leveau, P. Sillières, and J.-P. Vallat, *Campagnes de la Méditerranée romaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1993).
15. Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1962), 4.38.
16. Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. H. L. Jones, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William

Heinemann, 1924), 7.3.12.

17. See M. C. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

18. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, trans. F. C. Conybeare (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1912), 8.7.12.

19. Demosthenes, *On the Chersonese*, trans. J. H. Vince, vol. 1, *Demosthenes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1930), 8.70.

20. Arrian, *Arrian's Anabasis of Alexander and Indica*, trans. E. J. Chinnock (London and New York, 1893), 1.16.6.

21. Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, trans. R. M. Greer, vol. 10, *Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1954), 20.69.5.

22. See H. Klees, *Sklavenleben im Klassischen Griechenland* (Stuttgart: Fr. Steiner, 1998), 27.

23. Max Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, trans. R. I. Frank (London: Verso Classics, 1976).

24. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 8.7.

25. Andrea Carandini, ed., *Settefinestre, una villa schiavistica nell'Etruria romana*, 3 vols. (Modena: Panini, 1985).

26. W. Scheidel, "Quantifying the Sources of Slaves in the Early Roman Empire," *JRS* 87 (1997): 156–69, especially 158; and "The Slave Population of Roman Italy: Speculations and Constraints," *Topoi* 9 (1999): 129–44; and "The Demography of Roman Slavery and Manumission," in M. Bellancourt-Valdher and J.-N. Corvisier, eds., *La Démographie historique antique* (Arras: Artois Presse Université, 1999), 107–15.

27. See Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 40.

28. See William V. Harris, "Towards a Study of the Roman Slave Trade," *MAAR* 36 (1980): 117–40, especially 122; and "Demography, Geography and the Sources of Roman Slaves," *JRS* 89 (1999): 62–75.

29. Paul Veyne, *La Société romaine* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1991), 247–80.

30. See G. Alföldi, "Die Freilassung von Sklaven und die Struktur der Sklaverei in der römischen Kaiserzeit," *Rivista di storia antica* 2 (1972): 97–129.

31. Veyne, *La Société romaine*, 475. See also W. V. Harris, "Demography, Geography and the Sources of Roman Slaves," *JRS* 89 (1999): 62–75.

32. According to M. Tarpin (whom we thank for this information), the study of booty and of what the Latins said about it suggests that many women were enslaved, whereas men were more often slaughtered.

33. On other panegyries of slaves, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10.32.15, and Strabo, 12.5.3.
34. On the possible architectural characteristics of a slave market, see the articles published in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 180–240. The important thing is to set up a stand or a platform that makes it possible to get a good look at the slaves in an upright position (whence, perhaps, the word *statarion*, which evokes that position), and thus the *bômos* built at Akmonia (MAMA VI.260).
35. I. Triantaphyllopoulos, “Les vices cachés de la chose vendue d’après les droits grecs,” *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra* (Milan: A. Giuffrè, 1971), 5:697–719; E. Jakab, *Praedicere und cavere beim Marktkauf: Sachmängel im Griechischen und Römischen Recht* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997). A classical joke that one finds in specialized collections from the Roman era relates the conversation between a buyer and a slave vendor: “The slave you sold me is dead—Oh, by Jove, the vendor responds, when he was with me, he did no such thing!”

Chapter 4. The Slave and Economic Life

1. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), 17.320.
2. Xenophon, *The Economist*, trans. H.G. Dakyns, vol. 3, *The Works of Xenophon* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1897), 1.17.
3. H. Collitz et al., *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck, 1884–1911), n. 18999.
4. M. L. Bonsangue, “Aspects économiques et sociaux du monde du travail à Narbonne, d’après la documentation épigraphique (1er siècle avant J.-C.–1er siècle ap. J.-C.),” *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 13 (2002): 201–32.
5. C. Domergue, *Les Mines de la péninsule ibérique dans l’Antiquité romaine* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1990), 336–38.
6. See below, chapter 6, p. 161.
7. Domestic slaves and those who work for the administration of the cities or of the Empire are the subject of chapter 4.
8. See E. M. Harris, “Workshop, Marketplace and Household,” in Cartledge, Cohen, and Foxhall, eds., *Money, Labour and Land*, 98–99.
9. See L. Foxhall, “The Control of the Attic Landscape,” in B. Wells, ed., *Agriculture in Ancient Greece* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute at Athens, 1992), 155–59; R. Osborne, “Is It a Farm? A Definition of the Agricultural Sites and Settlements in Ancient Greece,” in Wells, ed., *Agriculture in Ancient Greece*, 21–27.
10. See S. D. Lambert, *Rationes Centesimarum: Sales of Public Land in Lykourgan Athens* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1997), 257–65.

11. See Xenophon's testimony in *Ways and Means*, 4.
12. See Michael H. Jameson, "Agricultural Labor in Ancient Greece," in Wells, ed., *Agriculture in Ancient Greece*, 139–42.
13. See M. Langdon and L. V. Watrous, "The Farm of Timesios: Rock-cut Inscriptions in Southattica," *Hesperia* 46 (1977): 162–77.
14. Appian, *The Roman History of Appian of Alexandria*, vol. 2, *The Civil Wars*, trans. Horace White (New York and London: Macmillan, 1899), 1.7. Plutarch also evokes these land confiscations in his biography of Tiberius Gracchus (*Tib. Gracchus*, 8).
15. Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.1.7.
16. An identical hierarchy existed in the workshops, which were run by workshop leaders—in Greek, the *hegemones* (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.97) or the *epistatai* (like the one Nicias bought for 6,000 drachmai, for his mining business, who was probably the Thracian Socias [Xenophon, *Ways and Means*, 4]).
17. On the *vilici*, see R. Marin, " 'Familia rustica': Les Esclaves chez les agronomes latins," in *Actes du colloque 1972 sur l'esclavage* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974), 267–97; and especially J. Carlsen, *Vilici and Roman Estates Managers until A.D. 284* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider), 1995.
18. It is for this reason that one is tempted to compare the "villa" system to American plantations. (On the life and work of plantation slaves in the United States, see M. Fabre, *Esclaves et planteurs dans le sud américain au XIXe siècle* [Paris: Julliard, "Archives" collection, 1970]).
19. See Andrea Carandini and Salvatore Settis, *Schiavi e padroni nell'Etruria romana* (Bari: Laterza, 1979); Carandini, ed., *Settefinestre, una villa schiavistica nell'Etruria romana*; and Dumont, *Servus, Rome et esclavage sous la République*, 54.
20. See Dumont, *Servus, Rome et esclavage sous la République*, 108–9.
21. See Robert-Etienne, "Recherches sur l'ergastule," in *Actes du colloque 1972 sur l'esclavage*, 249–66.
22. Dumont, *Servus, Rome et esclavage sous la République*, 67–68.
23. On this question see P. Leveau, P. Sillières and J.-P. Vallat, *Campagnes de la Méditerranée romaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1993); and J.-P. Vallat, "Les structures agraires de l'Italie républicaine," *Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42 (1987): 181–218.
24. It should be noted that the Latin word *latifundia* is not synonymous with the modern "latifondo," since, despite appearances, it does not designate the same reality; other Latin terms were the equivalents of the modern "latifondo"—for example, *saltus*. See Jean Andreau, "Encore quelques mots sur les *latifundia*," in *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994), 8:1–12; and *Du latifundium au latifondo: Un Héritage de Rome, une création médiévale ou moderne?*

(Bordeaux: Centre Pierre-Paris, 1995).

25. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 6.542–43.

26. See R. H. Randall, “The Erechtheum Workmen,” *AJA* 57 (1953): 199–210.

27. Plato, *Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury, vol. 11, *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1942), 8.846e.

28. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Life of Isocrates*, 1. Translation from the French by M. Leopold.

29. See F. Canciani, “Lydos, der Sklave?,” *AK* 21 (1978): 17 ff.

30. D. Manacorda, “Sulla proprietà della terra nella Calabria romana tra Repubblica e Impero,” in *Du latifundium au latifondo*, 143–89.

31. See G. Pucci, “La produzione della ceramic aretina,” *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 7 (1973): 255–93; G. Pucci, “Terra sigillata italic,” in *Enciclopedia dell’Arte, Antica, Atlante delle forme ceramiche* (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, vol. 2, 1985), 359–406; and “I bolli sulla terra sigillata: fra epigrafia e storia economica,” in William V. Harris, ed., *The Inscribed Economy: Production and Distribution in the Roman Empire in the Light of Instrumentum Domesticum* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Supplement to *JRA*, 1993), 73–80.

32. See C. Bémont and J.-P. Jacob, *La Terre sigillée gallo-romaine* (Paris: DAF), 1986.

33. See R. Bogaert, *Banques et banquiers dans les cités grecques* (Leyde: Sijthoff, 1968), 61–79.

34. See Jean Andreau, *Vie financière dans le monde romain. Les métiers de manieurs d’argent (IVe siècle av. J.-C.–IIIe siècle ap. J.-C.)* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1987): 614–15 and 631–32.

35. Marcel Morabito, *Les Réalités de l’esclavage d’après le Digeste* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981); and “Les esclaves privilégiés à travers le Digeste, témoins et acteurs d’une société en crise,” *Index* 13 (1985): 477–90 and 638–44.

36. In vol. 1 of the edition of Demosthenes’ *Plaidoyers civils*, Collection des Universités de France (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1954), 35, n.1.

37. See Dumont, *Servus, Rome et esclavage sous la République*, 368–71.

38. See Peter Garnsey, “Independent Freedmen and the Economy of Roman Italy under the Principate,” *Klio* 63 (1981): 359–71.

39. Henri Erman, *Servus vicarius, l’esclave de l’esclave romain* (Lausanne: F. Rougé, 1896), (excerpt from the collection published by the Law Faculty of the Université de Lausanne on the occasion of the Exposition nationale suisse, 393–532; new ed. (Naples: Jovene,

collection Antiqua, 1986), 443–44.

40. See Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 126.

41. Pseudo-Xenophon, *Constitution of the Athenians*, trans. E. C. Marchant, vol. 7, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1984), 1.11.

42. See Klees, *Sklavenleben im Klassischen Griechenland*, 144.

43. See below, chap. 5, pp. 150–52.

44. Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*.

Chapter 5. The Slave in the Household and the City

1. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death, a Comparative Study*.

2. S. Johnstone, “Cracking the code of silence,” in Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel, eds., *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 221–35.

3. See, for example, Joseph Vogt, *Sklaverei und Humanität*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Fr. Steiner, 1972).

4. See E. E. Cohen, *The Athenian Nation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 145 ff.

5. Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l’esclavage: Le ventre de fer et d’argent* (Paris: PUF, 1986), particularly 10–11.

6. See Marie-Madeleine Mactoux, “Esclaves et rites de passage,” *MEFRA* 102 (1990): 53–81.

7. Pseudo-Xenophon, *Constitution of the Athenians*, trans. E. C. Marchant, vol. 7, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1984), 1.10.

8. See I. Morris, “Remaining Invisible: The Archaeology of the Excluded in Classical Athens,” in Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel, eds., *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 193–220.

9. See S. P. Morris and J. K. Papadopoulos, “Greek Towers and Slaves: An Archaeology of Exploitation,” *AJA* 109 (2005): 155–225.

10. Demosthenes, *Against Stephanus*, trans. A. T. Murray, vol. 5, *Private Orations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1956), 45.71–72.

11. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 4a–b. Translation from the French by M. Leopold.

12. Plato, *Menexenus*, 82b. Translation from the French by M. Leopold.

13. Scholia to Aristophanes, *Knights*, 2. Translation from the French by M. Leopold.

14. See M. P. Hervagaut and Marie-Madeleine Mactoux, “Esclaves et société d’après Démosthènes,” in *Actes du colloque 1971 sur l’esclavage* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 62.

15. See Iza Biezunska-Malowist, "Lavie familiale des esclaves," *Index* 8 (1978–1979): 140–43.

16. See Morabito, *Les Réalités de l'esclavage d'après le Digeste*, 79–80.

17. See Erman, *Servus vicarius, l'esclave de l'esclave romain*, 401.

18. See E. M. Staerman and M. K. Trofimova, *La Schiavitu nell'Italia imperial* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1975), 80–82.

19. See Susan Treggiari, "Jobs in the Household of Livia," *PBSR* 43 (1975): 48–77; and Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 61–63.

20. See Mary T. Boatwright, *I Volusii Saturnini, una famiglia romana della prima età imperiale* (Bari: De Donato, 1982); and Marco Buonocore, *Schiavi et liberti dei Volusi Saturnini: Le iscrizioni del colombario sulla Via Appia antica* (Rome: l'Erma di Bretschneider, 1984).

21. With regard to these functions, see, for example, Gérard Boulvert, *Esclaves et affranchise impériaux sous le Haut Empire romain: Rôle politique et administrative* (Naples: E. Jovene, 1970); Susan Treggiari, "Domestic Staff at Rome in the Julio-Claudian Period," *Histoire sociale/ Social History* 6 (1973): 241–55; "Jobs in the Household of Livia," *PBSR* 43 (1975): 48–77; "Family Life among the Staff of the Volusii," *TAPA* 105 (1975): 393–401; and "Jobs for Women," *American Journal of Ancient History* 1 (1976): 76–104.

22. See N. Firatli and L. Robert, *Les Stèles funéraires de Byzance gréco-romaine*, Institut français d'archéologie d'Istanbul (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1964); and J. Kolendo, "Elements pour une enquête sur l'iconographie des esclaves dans l'art hellénistique et romain," in *Schiavitu, manomissione e classi dipendenti nel mondo antico* (Rome: l'Erma di Bretschneider, 1979), 169–70.

23. See A. Martin-Fugier, *La Place des bonnes: La Domesticité féminine à Paris en 1900* (Paris, Le Grand Livre du mois, 1998), 33–35.

24. See Georges Fabre, M. Mayer and I. Roda, *Inscriptions romaines de Catalogne, IV, Barcino* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1997), 238–39, n.154.

25. The word *vicarius* comes from military vocabulary. In modern times, the French "vicaire" and the English "vicar," which are derivatives, are part of ecclesiastical vocabulary.

26. See Erman, *Servus vicarius, l'esclave de l'esclave romain*, 403–9.

27. *ILS*, 1514.

28. We find this already at the end of the Republic, in Cicero (*Against Verres*, 2.1.91 and 93, and 2.3.86). See Erman, *Servus vicarius, l'esclave de l'esclave romain*, 403–9.

29. See Erman, *Servus vicarius, l'esclave de l'esclave romain*, 409–12.

30. See Paul R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1972), 127, 179–85; and M. Boudreau Flory, “Family in Familia: Kinship and community in slavery,” *American Journal of Ancient History* 3 (1978): 78–95.

31. See Virginia J. Hunter, *Policing Athens: Social Control in the Attic Lawsuits* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 162–73.

32. *Ibid.*, 170.

33. See Menander’s *The Girl from Samos*, lines 320 and 677

34. Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, trans. C. D. Adams, in *The Speeches of Aeschines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1919), 1.138–39.

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38. Hyperides, *Against Athenogenes*, trans. J. O. Burt, vol. 2, *Minor Attic Orators* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1962), 22.

39. See R. Osborne, “Religion, Imperial Politics and the Offering of Freedom to Slaves,” in Hunter and Edmonson, *Law and Social Status in Classical Athens*, 75–92.

40. Pseudo-Xenophon, *Constitution of the Athenians*, 1.10.

41. Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.15.

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43. See Alan Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 86–89.

44. *Ibid.*, 83–86.

45. See for example F. Hinard and J.-C. Dumont, eds., *Libitina, pompes funèbres et supplices en Campanie à l’époque d’Auguste* (Paris: De Boccard, 2003), 89–95.

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47. See Hinard and Dumont, eds., *Libitina, pompes funèbres et supplices en Campanie à l’époque d’Auguste*.

48. See Klees, *Sklavenleben im Klassischen Griechenland*, 114.

49. T. Maccius Plautus, *Captivi*, trans. H. T. Riley, vol. 1, *The Comedies of Plautus* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912), 977.

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51. See J. Scheid, *Religion et piété à Rome* (Paris: La Découverte), 21–22.

52. See E. Deniaux, "De l'ambitio à l'ambitus: Les lieux de la propaganda et de la corruption électorale à la fin de la République," in *L'Urbs, espace urbain et histoire* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1987), 286.

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59. See Boulvert, *Esclaves et affranchise impériaux sous le Haut Empire romain*, 143–49.

60. See Léon Halkin, *Les Esclaves publics chez les Romains* (Bruxelles, 1897; repr. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1965).

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98. Ibid., 80–85 and 240.

Chapter 6. Escaping Slavery

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4. See Y. Rivi re, "Recherche et identification des esclaves fugitives dans l'Empire romain," in Jean Andreau and C. Virlouvet, eds., *L'Information et la mer dans le monde antique* (Rome: EFR, 2002), 115–96, and, in particular, 122–31.
5. See also Jean A. Straus, "Pour une autre interpretation du P. Gen. 5," *Chronique d'Egypte* 60 (1985): 298–302.
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Florus, 2.7.11; Livy, *Periochae*, books 56 and 59; Plutarch, *Crassus*, 8–11; Orosius, *Adversus Paganos*, 5.6.3.

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25. See Paul R. C. Weaver, “Where Have All the Junian Latins Gone? Nomenclature and Status in the Early Empire,” *Chiron* 20 (1990): 275–304.

26. See Camodeca, “Per una riedizione dell’archivio ercolanese di L. Venidius Ennychus.”

27. Petronius, *Satyricon*, 29.

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Chapter 7. Slavery at the End of the Western Empire

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8. See Angelo Puglisi, "Servi, coloni, veteran e la terra in alcuni testi di Costantino," *Labeo* 23 (1977), 305–17.
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10. See J.-M. Carrié and A. Rousselles, *L'Empire romain en mutation*, 682.
11. See J. Beaucamp, *Le Statut de la femme à Byzance (IVe–VIIe siècles)*, vol. 2, *Les Pratiques sociales* (Paris: De Boccard, 1992), 57–61.
12. See J. Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 270–71, 276–77, 279, and 288.
13. Dion Cassius 71.11.4 and 5; *Historia Augusta*, Marcus Aurelius 22.2 and 24.4. See, for example, L. Cracco Ruggini, "I Barbari in Italia nei secoli dell'Impero," in Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli and Maria Giovanna Arcamone, eds., *Magistra Barbaritas: I Barbari in Italia* (Milan: Libri Scheiwiller, 1984), 3–51.
14. *Panegyric of Constantius*, in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*, C. E. V. Nixon and B. S. Rodgers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 8.9. See also A. Chauvot, *Opinions romaines faces aux barbares au IVe siècle ap. J.-C.* (Paris: De Boccard, 1998), 46–51.
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16. See M. Hubert, “Enfants à louer ou à vendre: Augustin et l'autorité parentale” in *Les Lettres de saint Augustin découvertes par Johannes Divjak* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1983), 189–204; and J. Rougé, “Escroquerie et brigandage en Afrique romaine au temps de saint Augustin (Ep. 8* and 10*),” in *Les Lettres de saint Augustin découvertes par Johannes Divjak*, 177–88.

17. C. Lepelley, *Les Cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas Empire*, vol. 1, *La Permanence d'une civilisation municipale* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1979), 227–28, and vol. 2, *Notices d'histoire municipale* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1981), 267.

18. See Boulvert, *Esclaves et affranchis impériaux sous le Haut Empire romain*, 453–57.

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20. On these slave collars, see Yann Rivière, “Recherche et identification des esclaves fugitifs dans l'Empire romain,” in Jean Andreau and Catherine Virlouvet, eds., *L'Information et la mer dans le monde antique* (Rome: EFR, 2002), 115–96.

21. See Augustine, *Sermons* 21.6 (C.C.41, p. 281) and *Theodosian Code*, 4.7.1; and C. Lepelley, *Les Cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas Empire*, vol. 1, *La Permanence d'une civilisation municipale*, 393.

22. See Youval Rotman, *Les Esclaves et l'esclavage: De la Méditerranée antique à la Méditerranée médiévale (VI^e–XI^e siècles)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres), particularly 19–52.

23. See Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*, 26.

24. *Ibid.*, 310–12.

25. See J. Beaucamp, *Le Statut de la femme à Byzance*, vol. 2, *Les pratiques sociales*, 344–45.

INDEX

Consult Index Locorum for location of specific text passages.

- abolition of slavery, 3–4, 128, 135–36, 149, 164–65, 167, 169n1
- Aegina, 41, 45–46, 55, 63
- Africa: slavery in, 51–52, 161–62; as source of slaves, 54, 60, 161–62
- Africanus, 11
- agriculture: absentee landlords and, 75; *coloni* (peasants) and, 158–60; *familia rustica* (country slaves) and, 68, 103; freemen or citizens and, 32, 68, 69–70; *instrumentum* of, 77; land ownership, size of land holdings, 69–71; number of slaves involved in, 48, 50, 52, 68–70, 73, 99–100, 159; and organization and management of slaves, 71–75, 76, 89–90, 103; plantation slavery, 91–92, 109; and *pyrgos* as slave quarters, 99–100; Roman *villa* system, 70–71; sharecropping, 92; slave labor and, 5, 18, 23, 50, 52, 68–76, 78, 87, 158–60; slaves as inseparable from land, 160. *See also* animal husbandry
- Agrigentum, 45
- Alcidamas, 129
- Alcman, 149
- Ambrosius, 135
- Anaxandrides, 133, 150
- animal husbandry, 75–76; shepherding, 50, 52, 73–76; shepherds and slave revolts, 144–45, 147–48
- Antimenes of Rhodes, 122
- apophora*, 89
- archeology and evidence of slavery, 31, 33, 51, 58–59, 69, 75, 77, 96, 99, 157
- Aristonikos, war of, 146–47
- Aristophanes, 7, 101
- Aristotle, 9, 28, 36, 45, 88, 95, 129–32, 135
- asylum, 140–41
- Athenaeus, 41, 43–44, 140
- Athenion, 102, 146
- Augustine, 134–35, 159, 161–64, 166
- Aurelian, 159
- Bagaudae, 164
- banditry, 56, 61–62, 143, 145
- Banquet of the Learned* (Athenaeus), 41

Beloch, J., 48, 49
 Bloch, Marc, 10, 157–58
 bond servants: long-term “rental” of children as slaves, 162. *See also*
 debt slavery Boulvert, Gerard, 163
 Brunt, P. A., 47, 49

C. Fulvius Flaccus, 146
 Caesar, 76, 143
 Caius Caecilius Isidorus, 51
 Callistus (Pope), 166
 Carandini, Andrea, 58–59, 157
 censuses: dependents and, 41, 43–45, 104–5; Greek, 40, 42–44;
 manumission during census process, 35, 150; names in, 103; and
 population estimates, 40–46; Roman, 40–41, 46–47, 103; taxation
 and, 42–43
 children: birth into slavery, 11, 57–60, 102, 107, 144, 163; enslavement
 of captive, 21, 55–57, 162; exposure or abandonment of, 57–58, 61–
 62, 160–61, 166; as household dependents, 8; sold into slavery by
 parents, 58, 61, 162; status in social hierarchy, 132; terms applied to
 child dependents, 8–9
 Chios, 9, 14, 27, 127, 140, 143
 Christianity, 11, 134–36, 160–68, 169n2
 Chysrippus, 150
 Cicero, 80, 84, 85, 108, 113–14, 134, 139
 Circumcellions, 164
 citizenship: debt slaves and, 11; freed slaves and, 15; Junian Latins and,
 154–55; manumission and eligibility for, 35–36, 149–50, 152, 155,
 164; poll tax and census of citizens, 42–43; Roman, 11; slaves as
 excluded from, 11, 155; Solon and legal distinction between slaves
 and citizens, 28–29, 93, 101, 109, 110–11, 133
 Cleon, 146
 clothing, 98–99, 105, 145
 Cnaeus Cornelius, 125–26
coloni (peasants), 158–60
 Columella, 58, 71, 72, 75
 Constantine, 160, 162, 164, 165 *Constitution of the Athenians* (Pseudo-
 Xenophon), 87, 89, 99, 111–12
 Corinth, 28, 41, 45–46, 63, 118
 Crassus, M. Licinius, 148
 Ctesicles, 42

Damophilos, 145
“day of slavery,” 4, 20, 54–55
debt slavery, 7–10, 11, 28–30, 37–38, 58, 61, 171n10
dediticii, 155
Delos, 54, 64, 146–47
Demetrius of Phaleron, 42–43
demographics: gender and slavery, 174n32; methodologies for assessing, 40. *See also* population, slave
Demosthenes, 55–56, 66, 72, 79, 81, 88, 90, 98, 99, 100, 102, 109, 124
dependents: in census data, 41, 43–45, 104–5; debt slavery as form of dependency, 7–10, 11, 28, 37–38, 61, 171n10; Greek helotic system of dependency, 129, 171n10; revolts among, 143–44; and Roman military practices, 121; as Roman public servants, 119; Romans and categories of, 68, 103; serf-dom, 10, 12–13, 39, 149; slaves contrasted with, 8–10, 19, 25, 27–28, 33–34, 37–39, 143–44, 171n10; social status of, 33–34
Diodorus of Sicily, 7, 45
domestic servants, 4, 8, 23, 32, 36, 45, 105–6; free individuals as, 44
doulos, 8
Drimakos, 143
Dumont, Jean-Christian, 14, 74, 141, 145

economic sectors, employment of slaves in, 5, 12, 14, 18–19; banking and, 76–79; manufacturing and, 48, 67, 76–79, 85–86, 92. *See also* agriculture

education of slaves, 79, 100–101, 120

Egypt, 51–52

enslavement: “day of slavery” as moment of, 4, 20, 54–55; of Greeks by Greeks, 55–56, 129; as moral condition, 133; as result of law, 130; rituals of, 97–98; as social death, 4–5, 11, 95. *See also* recruitment into slavery Epictetus, 4, 134 *ergastulae*, 74

escape from slavery: asylum or sanctuary for fugitives, 140–41; branding or tattooing of fugitives, 109, 140; as contract violation, 138; disclosure of runaways during sales, 138; privileged slaves and, 133, 163–64; professional slave catchers, 139; punishment for abetting in, 164; rewards for captured fugitives, 140; suicide as means of, 137–38; and violence against the slave master, 141–42; war as opportunity for, 127. *See also* manumission; revolts

Eunus, 146

familia rustica (country slaves), 68, 103

familia urbana (urban slaves), 68, 103
fate and fatalism, 37–38, 55, 129, 155–56, 167–68
female slaves. *See* gender Finley, Moses I., 10, 14–15, 29, 93, 144–45
First Punic War, 125
Fitzmaurice, William, 138
food: slaves rations, 73, 74, 87, 98
foreigners, slaves as, 11, 96, 97, 101, 130; identity and slaves as, 15–16
Frank, T., 47
freedom, 10–11, 15–16, 20, 132, 165, 167–68. *See also* escape from slavery; manumission
fugitive slaves. *See* escape from slavery

Galen, 45
Gallic Wars, 123
Garnsey, Peter, 136
Gaul, 30, 47, 51, 79, 119–20, 164
gender: Christianity and gender equality, 166; and division of labor, 7, 23, 57, 67, 120; and enslavement, 21, 55, 57, 62, 104–6, 160, 162, 174n32; and manumission, 59, 153; marriage between slaves and free individuals, 15; of “sacred slaves,” 18, 118; and separation of social spaces, 99; sexual slavery and, 21, 24, 67, 102, 108, 153; terms applied to female dependents, 8–9
gladiators, 67, 138, 143, 147–48
Gregory of Nyssa, 169n1

Herodotus, 7, 26–27, 53, 110
Hippolytus, 166 *Histoire de l’esclavage dans l’Antiquité* (Wallon), 5
Homilies (Gregory of Nyssa), 169n1
Horace, 95 “humanity” of slaves, 10–11, 95–97, 111, 115, 129, 131, 165, 167–68
Hyperides, 44

identity, personal, 11; serfs and collective identity, 13; slaves and constitution of free identity, 15–16
inferiority of slaves, 101, 132; Christian notions of equality and, 135–36; morality and, 66, 132, 133; “natural,” 130, 131–32, 134–35; as result of law, 130; social hierarchy and, 8, 80–81, 154
introduction of slavery, 7–10, 93
invisibility of slaves, 5, 40, 95–96, 98

jokes about slavery, 174n35

Jones, R. Duncan, 51–52

Judaism, 135–36

Julian, Emperor, 163

Klees, H., 151

L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, 146

labor. *See* work Lactantius, 135–36, 160–61

Larcus Macedo, murder of, 142

latifundia, 176n24

Laurium, mines of, 41–42, 44, 54, 70, 76, 90, 114, 133

laws and legal provisions: flight as contract violation, 138; humanity of slaves in, 10–11; legal status of slaves in cities, 108–14; manumission, 35, 50–51, 149–52, 153–55, 164–65; slavery as legal institution, 5, 130 (*see also* Solon *under this heading*); slave societies and, 15; Solon and distinction between slaves and citizens, 28–29, 93, 101, 109, 110–11, 133; torture and testimony at trial, 110, 112–14

Lengelle-Tardy, M., 3

Lex Aelia Sentia, 153–54

Lex Fufia Caninia, 50–51, 154

Lex Junia, 154

Lex Visellia, 153

libertini, 50

literacy: education of slaves, 79, 100–101, 120; slaves as authors, 4

living conditions: of agricultural slaves, 73, 99–100; autonomy and “living on his own,” 89–90; clothing provided to slaves, 98–99, 105, 145; diet of slaves, 73, 74, 87, 98; in *ergastulae*, 74; family and sex lives of slaves, 101–3; health and medical care, 100; quality of life, 12; “slave space” in the residence, 99

Lo Cascio, E., 47, 49

Locris, 8

luck. *See* fate and fatalism

lutra, 151

Lysias, 45

management of slaves: agricultural system and, 71–75, 76, 89–90, 103; as aspect of property management, 71; contractual systems and, 90–91; direct systems of, 89–90; “living on their own,” 89–91; manager slaves, 85–87, 107–8; overseers and, 69, 71–72, 79, 80, 88; and *peculium* as institution, 84, 87, 107–8

manufacturing, 5; of pottery, 77–79; of textiles, 23, 76; workshops and slave labor, 45, 66, 76–77, 81, 89–90

manumission, 4, 11; absence of, 21–22, 25; “by the rod,” 32, 35; careers after, 67, 80; census and declaration of, 35; of children born into slavery, 102; Christianity and, 164–65; and citizenship, 35–36, 149–50, 152, 155, 164; as common practice, 88, 150; and economics of slavery, 93–94; gender and, 59, 153; as gradual process, 150–52; Greek practices of, 38–39, 149–50, 150–52; of imperial vs. individual freedmen, 153; legal provisions for, 35, 50–51, 149–52, 153–55, 164–65; legal restrictions on, 50–51, 153–55; luck and, 155–56; marriage and, 153; military service and, 125; of public servants, 120; purchase of, 35, 82–83, 87–88, 151; and relationship with previous owner, 67, 108, 151–52; as reward for loyalty, 32, 127; Roman practices of, 38–39, 149–50, 152–56; as sale to god or sanctification, 150–51; and slavery as “fate,” 156; in slave societies, 15; and social stability, 156; and social status, 21–22, 153, 164–65; and spiritual status of slaves, 115; taxes on, 48, 150; testamentary, 35–36, 50–51, 154, 172n25

Marcianus, 121

marooning, 142–43

marriage: and manumission, 153; between slaves and free individuals, 15, 108, 166, 167; slaves and right to marry, 13, 101–2, 108, 118; and social status, 11

Marxism and Marxist historiography, 13, 91–93, 149, 157

Meillassoux, Claude, 56

Menander, 102

military service, slaves and, 120–28; combatant roles, 123–24, 126–28; escape opportunities, 127, 143; financial arrangements, 122, 125, 126; manumission as reward for, 125; naval roles, 124–25; prohibitions against, 121, 126; support roles played during campaigns, 121–23

mining, 41–42, 44, 54, 70, 76, 90, 114, 133

misthos, 89

Mommsen, Theodore, 47, 125

morality: Christian influence on, 166–67; of Greeks enslaving Greeks, 55–56, 129–30; of slavery as institution, 132–36; slaves as morally inferior, 66, 101, 132

murder: of masters, 141–42, 146; of slaves, 38

Myrmex, 87

names, 11, 18–19; census data and, 103; on *columbaria*, 104–5; of craftsmen, 78–79; forbidden by law, 109; geographical origins used as, 53; serfs and collective identity, 13; slaves as nameless strangers, 50

Neara, 102

Nicarete, 102

Nicolet, C., 47

North Africa, 51–52

North America, slavery in, 4, 13–14, 137–38

P. Clonius, murder of, 146

Patterson, Orlando, 95

Paulinus of Pella, 167

peculium, 81–83, 87–88

Pedanius Secundus, murder of, 142

Peloponnesian War, 127, 140

Pergamum, 44–45

Petronius (*Satyricon*), 61, 103–4, 108, 139, 153, 155–56

Philip of Macedonia, 122

Philo of Alexandria, 134–35

Philostratus, 11, 58, 75

Phocis, 8

Piganiol, A., 159

plantation slavery, 91–92, 109

Plato, 9, 23, 77, 101, 129, 131, 141, 144

Pliny the Elder, 50

politics: ideology of slavery, 10–11, 95, 110–11, 130, 135, 165; Marxism and Marxist historiography, 13, 91–93, 149, 157; slaves role in, 111, 114, 116–20

Pompey, 61, 118, 127, 128, 143, 148

population, slave, 5; in Athens, 41–44; census records as indication of, 40–46; estimation of Roman, 14; and existence of “slave society,” 52; Greek methods for estimation of, 41–42; as majority population, 49, 50; methods to estimate, 40; as minority population, 14; in North Africa and Egypt, 51–52; number of slaves owned by individuals, 51; in Roman world, 46–52; taxes and estimation of, 41–43, 47–48; wealth and, 44–45. *See also* demographics

Posidonius, 145

praepositio, 81–82, 85–87

privileged slaves: and escape from slavery, 133, 163–64; public slaves as, 110, 112, 148; and between slave and owner, 101; status, social, 25, 37, 90, 107

Proculus, 159

property, ownership of: the Empire and collective, 143; forbidden to slaves, 110; by gods, 18; and increased demand for slaves, 29; and inheritance law, 152, 154; inheritance of slave’s, 152; land holdings, 29, 69–70; *peculium* as slave’s property, 81–84, 87; slaves as property, 3–4, 10–12, 15, 29–30, 38, 43, 95–97, 111–12, 118, 131, 143; slaves as slave owners, 103, 107–8, 112; slaves as tradable commodity, 10–12; slave societies and, 15

prostitution, 102

Pseudo-Aristotle, 87, 93, 98, 132, 144, 150

Pseudo-Xenophon, 87, 89, 99, 111–12

public servants, 110, 112, 114, 118–20

Quinctius Cincinnatus, 70–71

ransom: and manumission as purchased by slave, 88; of prisoners of war, 55–56, 129, 167; and role of money in exchange, 26–27; and status of the slave, 21–23

recruitment into slavery, 5; birth into slavery, 11, 57–60, 102, 107, 144, 163; children sold by parents, 58, 61, 162; Christianity and changes in, 160–63; debt slavery, 11; ethnic or regional origin of slaves, 52–54; exposed infants and, 57–58, 61–62, 160–61, 166; gender and, 21, 55, 57, 62, 104–6, 160, 162, 174n32; indebtedness, 61 (*see also* debt slavery); organized slave trade and, 63–64; piracy or banditry as source of slaves, 11, 14–15, 34, 56, 61–62, 64; sexual reproduction as source of slaves, 11 (*see also* birth into slavery *under this heading*); voluntary slavery, 61; war as source of slaves, 11–12, 14–15, 34, 52, 54–56, 129, 161–62

Redde, M., 125

relationships between slave and owner, 5; during archaic period, 37; as community of interest, 88; manumission and continued, 67, 151; power dynamics of slavery, 8, 20; privileged slaves and affectionate, 101; sexual, 101–2, 108

religion, 115–16; manumission as sale to god, 150–51; “sacred slaves” or “slaves of the god,” 18, 118; sanctuary in temples, 141; slave revolts and, 144; spiritual status of slaves, 95, 115

rental of slaves, 89, 162

revolts, 50, 52; Aristonikos’s war, 146–47; manu-mission and social stability, 156; shepherds’ roles in, 144–45, 147–48

Rhodopis, 149

runaways. *See* escape from slavery

Saint-Hilaire, J. Cels, 50

Satyricon (Petronius), 61, 103–4, 108, 139, 153, 155–56

Scheidel, W., 49, 59–60

Second Punic War, 48, 96, 126 *Senatus Consultus Claudianum*, 165

Seneca, 50, 75, 104, 108, 134, 138, 153

serfdom or serfs: contrasted with slavery, 9–10, 12–13, 38; in Homer, 25; manumission and, 149; as natives of the land, 12–13. *See also* debt slavery Servile Wars, 34, 52, 145–49

Servius Tullius, 171n19

sexuality of slaves, 102; castration of slaves, 27; manumission as result of sexual relationships, 108; reproduction of slaves, 11, 57–62; women as sexual property, 21, 108

shepherding, 50, 52, 73–76

Sidonius Appollinaris, 167

slave markets, 14–15, 27–30, 55–56, 63–65, 174n34

slave societies, 5, 13–16, 52

slave trade: Delos as hub of, 54, 64, 146–47; disclosure of defects, requirements for, 64–65, 100, 138; in Muslim world, 158; sources of slaves for (see recruitment into slavery); taxation and the, 42, 46

“social death,” slavery as, 4–5, 11, 95

Social War, 46–47

Solon, 28–29, 42–43, 93, 101, 109–11, 133

sources of slaves. *See* recruitment into slavery Spartacus, 52, 145, 147–49

status, social: ambiguity of slaves’, 131, 160, 165; of dependents, 33–34; “humanity” and slaves’, 10–11, 95–97, 111, 115, 129, 131, 165, 167–68; legal status of slaves in cities, 108–14; manumission and, 21–22, 153, 164–65; power dynamics of slavery, 8; “privileged” or elite slaves, 25, 37, 90, 107; and ransom of slaves, 21–23; slaves as social class, 12, 154–55, 159–60; and “social death” of slavery, 4–5, 11, 95

Stoicism, 11, 132–33, 134, 145

substitutes (slaves of slaves), 107–8

Suetonius, 61–62, 76

suicide, 137–38

Sulla, 122, 128

surveillance: of slave labor, 69, 71–72, 80, 86, 88, 144–45; slaves as responsible for, 115

Symachus, 159

Tacitus, 50–51, 62, 104, 142, 153

taxes: estimation of slave population and levy of, 41–42; on manumission of slaves, 48, 150; poll taxes, 42–43; on slave labor, 41–42; on slaves as commodity, 42, 46; on slaves owned in Rome, 48

testamentary manumission, 35–36, 50–51, 154, 172n25

Theopompus, 9, 26–27

Theoprastus, 43

Thucydides, 171n10

Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, 125, 175n14

Titus Curtius, 50

Titus Vettius, 145

trade: establishment of slave trade, 12; slaves as commodity, 10–12, 170n3; slave trade and slave society, 14–15

trade in slaves. *See* slave trade

Tryphon, 102

Varro, 50

Vindicius, 32, 35

violence: enslavement as violent event, 4, 20, 54–55, 161–62; execution, 113, 117; and ideology of slavery, 95, 110–11, 130, 135; slave revolts and, 34, 50, 52, 141–42, 146–47; and submission, 20; torture, 110, 112–14; whipping as punishment, 110, 113. *See also* war
voluntary slavery, 61

wages or salary earned by slaves, 74; food and shelter as, 83, 87; paid public servants, 112, 118; paid to owner, 89, 118, 122, 124, 125; the *peculium*, 81–84; the *praepositio* and, 85

Wallon, Henri, 5, 48

war: enlistment of slaves in military, 120–28; as liberation opportunity for slaves, 127–28, 161; prisoners of war as slaves, 11–12, 14–15, 52, 54–56, 129; and wealth accumulation, 25, 130

War of the Allies, 46–47

Ways and Means (Xenophon), 41–42

wealth: Christianity and, 165; of freedmen, 153; slaves as wealthy, 88, 120; and use of slave labor, 29, 45, 49, 68–69, 130, 159; war and accumulation of, 25, 130

Weber, Max, 56

Whittaker, C. R., 51

women. *See* gender

work: as definitive of slavery, 66; domestic, 4, 8, 13, 20, 23, 32, 36, 45, 105–6; gender and division of labor, 7, 23, 57, 67, 120; hierarchy or status and occupation, 66, 175n16; overseers and managers, 69, 71–72, 79, 80, 88; payment for (*see* wages or salary earned by slaves); public services, 114, 118–20; servant/ employee division of slave labor, 105–6; slaves as skilled craftsmen or professionals, 67, 79–80, 89–90, 100–101, 153. *See also* economic sectors, employment of slaves
in

INDEX LOCORUM

Aeschines

Against Ctesiphon

44, 150

Against Timarchus

1.15, 111

1.54, 112

1.97, 81

1.138–39, 29, 109

On the False Embassy

2.83, 109

2.156, 55

Aeschylus

Agamemnon

1042, 98

Persians

242, 131

Antiphone

On the Murder of Herodes, 141

Appian

The Civil Wars

1.1.7, 70

1.3.26, 116, 117

1.6.54, 117

1.7.56–60, 116

1.8.67, 116

1.8.73, 117

1.8.74, 117

1.13.109, 127

1.14.116–17, 147

1.14.120–21, 148

2.1.5, 116

Apuleius

Apologia

93.3–4, 51, 159

Metamorphoses

8.30–31, 106

9.1–2, 106

Aristophanes

Assembly of Women, 102

The Frogs, 101, 110, 127

The Knights, 137

Peace, 110

Aristotle

frag. 611.9, 26

Athenian Constitution

12.4, 28

40.2, 128

Economics

1.1, 1.6, 43

1.5, 144

Eudemian Ethics

1241b, 131

Nicomachean Ethics

1149a, 132

1161b, 131

Politics

1.1253b, 131–32

1.1255a, 129–30

1.1255b, 88, 100, 132

1.1260a, 132

1.1278a, 102, 131

2.1269a, 144

7.1325b–1326a, 43

Athenaeus

Banquet of the Learned

4.168a–b, 43

5.211d, 102

6.264c, 8

6.265–66, 9, 26, 143

6.267e, 44

6.272c, 42

6.272e–f, 146

15.695f–696a, 25

Attican Inscriptions

421, 53–54, 101

1553.18, 90–91

1553–59, 151

1570.78–79, 112

10051, 76

Augustine

Against Julian

4.12.61, 134

City of God

19.21, 134

Enarratio in psalmos

138.60, 164

In Johannis Evangelium tractatus

41.4, 164

Caesar

The Gallic Wars

6.40.1, 123

Cassius Dio

Roman History

73.25.4, 61

Cato the Elder

De agricultura, 71

2.7, 73

5, 72

56–59, 73

Cicero

Ad Familiares

5.9.2, 139

5.11.3, 139

13.77.2–3, 139

De frumento

119, 85

Letters to and from Quintus

fr., 1.2, 139

Pro Cluentio

175–78, 113–14

Pro Flacco

32.80, 103

Pro Plancio

25.62, 80

Pro Rabiro Postumo

15, 84

Columella

De re rustica, 71

11.1.7, 72–73

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum

6.9683, 67

Demosthenes

Against Aphobus

27.9, 81
Against Boeotus
40.41, 110
Against Callicles
55, 111
Against Eubulides
57.18–19, 56
Against Evergus and Mnesibulus
47.56, 99
47.59, 101, 109
47.61, 99
Against Naeara
59.18, 100
59.124, 110
Against Nicostratus
53.6, 138
53.6–9, 56
53.19, 101
53.20–22, 90
Against Olympiodorus
48.14–15, 89
Against Ontenor
30.27, 89
Against Phormio
34, 90, 111
Against Pantaenetus
37.21, 90
37.22, 76
Against Polycles
50.7, 124
Against Stephanus
45.71–72, 100
45.81, 87
45.80 ff., 88
Against Timotheus
49.56, 110
First Philippic
4.36, 124
47.72, 90
For Phormio
36.8, 101, 109
On the Chersonese
8.70, 55
On the Crown

19.305–6, 56

Diodorus of Sicily

Library of History

13.84, 45

17.11.2, 127

20.69.5, 55

20.82.5, 63

34.2.19, 146

34–35.2.26, 147

36.2a, 145

39.5, 7

Diogenes Laertius

Lives of the Philosophers

5.14, 87

4.46, 102

6.55, 139

7.121–22, 133

Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Roman Antiquities

1.83.3, 31

1.85, 31

2.9.1–2, 36

2.9.2, 34

2.9.2–2.11, 34

2.16.1, 32–33

2.28.1, 32

4.1.2–3, 32

4.22–24, 36

5.22.1, 32

5.53, 38

6.79, 38

9.5.4, 34

9.67.2, 32

10.53.1, 32

16.5.4, 172n34

Epictetus

Discourses

1.9.29–30, 4

1.19.19–23, 4

Euripides

fr. 50, 101

fr. 831, 130

Die Fragmente der griechischer Historiker

Ctesicles

245, frag. 1, 42

Nicolaus of Damascus

90, frag. 58, 28

Philocharos

328, frag. 97, 115

Frontinus

Stratagems

4.1.6, 122

Gaius

Digest

40.9.10, 86

The Institutes

1.13, 155

1.16–19, 153

1.22–24, 154

1.32a–c, 154

1.33–34, 154

1.37–45, 153–54

1.53, 134, 141

3.39–76, 152

Gortyn lawcode

7.10–15, 28

Gregory of Nyssa

Commentary on Ecclesiastes, Homily IV

2.7, 136

Herodotus

The Histories

2.104, 53

2.134, 26, 27

4.1–4, 110

8.105, 27

Hippolyte

Refutatio

9.13.1–12, 80

Hipponax

Attican Inscriptions

421, 53–54

Historia Augusta

Aurelian

48, 159

Firmus

12.1, 159

Homer

Iliad

1.99, 23

3.409, 20

6.454–57, 21

6.455, 20

6.542–43, 76

7.472–75, 22

9.400, 22

19.297, 21

21.80, 23

21.99, 21

23.742–47, 23

Odyssey

1.429, 22, 24

1.430, 23

2.237, 23

4.12, 20

7.103, 23

11.188, 24

11.489–91, 21

14.24, 23–24

14.59, 20

14.61–65, 22

14.264–65, 21

14.435, 24

14.452, 24

15.363–65, 24

15.376–79, 24

15.413, 24

15.426, 24

16.140–41, 24

17.320, 66

17.323, 20

17.422, 23

18.158–76, 23
18.182, 24
18.366–83, 21
20.5–30, 24
20.107–10, 23
20.210, 21
21.214–16, 24
22.421, 23
22.423, 20
22.457–73, 24
23.289, 23

Hyperides

Against Athenogenes, 30, 102, 111, 151

Isaeus

On the Estate of Pyrrhus, 102

Isocrates

Areopagiticus

7.49, 98

On the Peace

8.48, 124

Panathenaicus

12.214, 137

Javolenus

Digest

33.7.25.1, 78

John Chrysostom

Homilia in Matthaeum

63.4, 159

Julianus

Digest

14.3.12, 85

Justinian Code

5.37.22.2–4, 165

6.1.3, 164

6.1.4, 164

6.1.6, 164

11.48.7, 160

Lactantius

The Divine Institutes

5.14.15–5.15.3, 136

6.20.18–25, 160–61

Lex Aelia Sentia, 153–54

Lex Fufia Caninia, 50–51, 154

Lex Junia, 154 *Lex Visellia*, 153

Livy

Roman History

1.8.6, 32

1.35.1–2, 32–33

1.39.5–6, 171n19

2.4.5, 35

2.5.10, 35

2.23, 38

2.30, 38

2.34.3, 32

4.30, 32

32.26.4–18, 144

33.36.1–3, 144

Lycurgus

Against Leocrates

41, 128

Lysias

Against Simon

3, 101

For Callias

5.5, 45

On the Refusal of a Pension

24.6, 45

On the Sacred Olive

7.35, 181n1

Marcianus

Digest

34.1.2, 84

49.16.11, 121

Melania

Vita Melaniae

18, 159

Menander

Hero

6ff., 87–88

P. Turner

22, 138

Palladius

1, 159

6, 159

Papinian

Digest

14.3.19.1, 86

14.3.19.3, 86

Paul

Digest

14.1.5, 85

32.99 *pr.*, 103

33.10.12, 103

46.3.35, 85

Paulinus

Eucharisticos, 167

Pausanias

Description of Greece, 123

Petronius

Satyricon, 61, 108, 139, 155

Philo of Alexandria

Allegorical Interpretation

3.89, 134–35

The Contemplative Life

70, 135

Every Good Man Is Free

79, 135

Philostratus

Life of Appollonius of Tyana

8.7, 11, 54, 58

Plato

Laws, 161

4.720, 100

6.776b–c, 101, 129, 131, 144

6.777b, 109

6.777e, 109

6.778a, 131

8.846e, 27

11.914e, 138

- 11.916, 64
- Menexenus*, 100
- Republic*
 - 9.578e, 141
- Plautus
 - Persa, or the Persian*
 - 108, 115
- Pliny the Elder
 - The Natural History*
 - 7.39, 83
 - 33.26, 50
 - 33.135, 51
 - 37.77, 49 128–29, 83
- Pliny the Younger
 - Letters*
 - 3.14, 108, 142
 - 10.29, 121
 - 10.30, 121
- Plutarch
 - Alcibiades*
 - 36.3, 56
 - Agesilaus*
 - 1.22, 63
 - Antony*
 - 64.2, 124–25
 - Cato the Elder*
 - 21.3, 73–74
 - 21.4, 113
 - Cato the Younger*
 - 15, 122–23
 - Crassius*
 - 11, 148
 - Moralia*
 - 4a–b, 100, 101
 - Pericles*
 - 16.3–5, 72
- Polybius
 - 4.38, 53, 63
- Pomponius
 - Digest*
 - 50.26.166 pr., 103
- Pseudo-Anodocides
 - 4.23, 55
- Pseudo-Aristotle
 - Economics*

1.5.6, 73, 102
1.344b 18, 54
2.2.34, 122, 140

Pseudo-Plutarch

Life of Isocrates
1, 28

Pseudo-Xenophon

Constitution of the Athenians
1.10, 99, 111
1.11, 89

Salvian of Marseille

De gubernatione Dei
4, 22–23, 167

Seneca

De clementia
1.24.1, 50
Letters to Lucilius
70.20–21, 138
70.23, 138
Moral Epistles
47.2–3, 134
47.11, 134
On Tranquility of Mind
8, 134
8.6, 104, 153

Sophocles

Ajax
499, 98

Strabo

Geography
3.2.9, 76
4.6.7, 60–61
5.1.8, 63
7.3.12, 53
8.6.20, 118
14.3.2, 63
14.5.2, 64
17.824, 6

Suetonius

De Vita Caesarum: Augustus
32.1–3, 61–62
Divus Iulius

42, 76

Tiberius

8.2, 61–62

Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum

III, 92, 140

Tacitus

Annals

14.42, 104

14.42–45, 142

14.43.4, 51

Germania

19, 62

Histories

5.5, 62

Theodosian Code

2.25.1, 160

4.9.1, 164

4.12.13, 163

9.30.2, 159

9.42.7, 159

12.1.6, 159

16.8.5, 165

16.9.9, 165

Theophrastus

Characters, 86

22.4, 115

30.7, 98

Thucydides

History of the Peloponnesian War

1.55, 63

1.139.2, 140

2.4, 127

3.17, 121

4.94, 122

7.13, 127

7.13.2, 124

7.27, 127

8.40.2, 9, 127, 143

Ulpian

Digest

14.1.1.14, 87
14.1.1.15, 85
14.1.1.18, 85
14.3.5, 85
14.3.11.7, 85
15.1.5.4, 82
32.91.2, 86
34.1.1, 85
50.15.4.5, 103

Varro

De re rustica, 71
1.2.17–19, 73–74
2.1.26, 73–74
2.2.20, 76
2.3.8, 76
2.10, 73–74
2.10.10, 76
2.11.23, 76
3.3.4, 75–76
3.10.2, 75–76
3.17.6, 75–76

Velleius Paterculus

The Roman History 2.67.2, 117
2.82, 127

Xenophon

Anabasis

2.4.27, 63
4.8.4, 53
7.7.53, 63

Economics

1.17, 66
3.4, 72, 109
5.6, 88
7.35, 88
9.5, 99
9.16, 71
10.10–11, 101
10.12, 102
11.16, 71
12.3, 100
12.6–7, 88
13.12, 72
14.9, 88
20.16, 72

20.17, 72

Hellenica

1.6.24, 127

4.6.6, 63

Hiero

10.4, 141

Memorabilia

1.5, 68

2.1.15–17, 109

On Revenues

4.17, 90

4.36, 63–64

Ways and Means, 54

4.24–25, 41–42

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